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**University College Cork, Ireland**  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

**A post-structuralist analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy with  
specific emphasis on the Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

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A thesis submitted to the National University of Ireland, Cork  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2013

**A post-structuralist analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy with specific emphasis on the Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the thesis submitted here is my own work and has not been submitted for another degree either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Abstract**

Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) have since their beginnings in the early 1990s gained an increasingly important role and now constitute a central feature of Irish youth justice provision. Managed by the Irish Youth Justice Service and implemented by the Gardai and a variety of youth work organisations as well as independent community organisations, GYDPs are located at the crossroads of welfarist and corporatist approaches to youth justice, combining diversionary and preventative aspects in their work. To date, these projects have been subjected to very little systematic analysis and they have thus largely escaped critical scrutiny. To address this gap, this thesis locates the analysis of GYDP policy and practice within a post-structuralist theoretical framework and deploys discourse analysis primarily based on the work of Michel Foucault. It makes visible the official youth crime prevention and GYDP policy discourses and identifies how official discourses relating to youth crime prevention, young people and their offending behaviour, are drawn upon, negotiated, rejected or re-contextualised by project workers and JLOs. It also lays bare how project workers and JLOs draw upon a variety of other discourses, resulting in multi-layered, complex and sometimes contradictory constructions of young people, their offending behaviour and corresponding interventions. At a time when the projects are undergoing significant changes in terms of their repositioning to operate as the support infrastructure underpinning the statutory Garda Youth Diversion Programme, the thesis traces the discursive shifts and the implications for practice that are occurring as the projects move away from a youth work orientation towards a youth justice orientation. A key contribution of this thesis is the insight it provides into how young people and their families are being constituted in individualising and sometimes pathologising ways in GYDP discourses and practices. It reveals the part played by the GYDP intervention in favouring individual and narrow familial causes of offending behaviour while broader societal contexts are sidelined. By explicating the very assumptions upon which contemporary youth crime prevention policy, as well as GYDP policy and practice are based, this thesis offers a counterpoint to the prevailing evidence-based agenda of much research in the field of Irish youth justice theory and youth studies more generally. Rather, it encourages the reader to take a step back and examine some of the most fundamental and unquestioned assumptions about the construction of young people, their offending behaviour and ways of addressing this, in contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy and practice.

**Dedicated to:**

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## Chapter 1

### **Delineating the field: Irish youth crime prevention policy, Garda Youth Diversion Projects and post-structuralist social policy analysis**

#### **Introduction**

The criminal justice system is recognised as one of the ‘...mechanisms which shape the experiences and expectations of young people’ (Smith, 2007:161). Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) are now a central element of official youth justice policy and have become one of the key components of a scaled approach to youth justice, championed by the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS).<sup>1</sup> They are officially defined as ‘...community based, multi-agency youth crime prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people who have been involved in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects’ (IYJS, 2010:2). They have grown from just two projects in Ronanstown (North Clondalkin) and Killinarden (Tallaght) in 1991 to 100 projects in 2011.<sup>2</sup> The annual budget in 2010 was nearly €12 million. Over 5000 young people between the ages of 10 and 18 participate in these projects annually (IYJS, 2011). The majority of projects are located in disadvantaged areas and young people participating in the projects face challenges often associated with poverty and social exclusion (see Appendix 1; CSER/DIT 2001:52; Powell et al., 2012a: 165).

To date very limited literature and research exists on the GYDPs. Three of the key studies have been the analysis of the profile of participants (CSER, 2001), an evaluation assessing the projects’ impact and effectiveness (Bowden and Higgins, 2000) and a profiling exercise, depicting specific local circumstances of youth crime in project areas (IYJS, 2009b). Bowden (2006) provided a thought provoking but small scale study looking closely at the operation of two crime prevention projects. He found that the two projects studied responded to similar issues in quite diverse ways in that the staff members in one project actively resisted their instrumentalisation as crime preventionists, while in the other project workers engaged in an

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<sup>1</sup> The *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* (IYJS, 2008a:61) spells out the Government’s commitment to use alternatives to prosecution through interventions including: the Garda Youth Diversion Projects; the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme, community sanctions and Restorative Justice.

<sup>2</sup> The *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* (IYJS, 2008a:61) had envisioned the growth of projects to 168 by 2012, which was not realised due to the recession.

explicit social control agenda. Apart from Bowden's study, to the best of my knowledge, no detailed exploration of the GYDPs in terms of how they operate as crime prevention and diversionary initiatives has been undertaken. As a result there has been no significant consideration of the implications for the young participants or for the youth work sector, now deeply involved in the operation of these projects.

In the British context, there has been an extensive debate of the use of diversionary and community based measures in youth crime prevention (Armstrong 2006; France 2008; Garland 2001; Goldson and Jamieson, 2002). In addition, a range of empirical studies have examined everyday practices in such initiatives (Balucci, 2008; Burnett and Appleton 2004; France and Wiles 1996; Souhami, 2007), drawing on key theoretical discussions pertaining to social control, new penology, risk based frameworks and actuarial techniques. These studies have been significant in raising important questions as to how young people are treated within community based crime prevention initiatives. These questions are also very pertinent in the Irish context.

The risk-factor paradigm as it is increasingly and systematically applied in the GYDPs also has not been subjected to rigorous critical and systematic analysis. In the British context, Case (2006) argues that youth crime prevention projects should refrain from working with formal 'at-risk' check-lists, but rather conduct authentic consultative processes with young people in each project site. Similarly, Kemshall (2008) argues that the role of actuarial practices in youth crime prevention initiatives potentially erodes rights and justice for young people. She proposes that youth justice interventions should effectively respond to this paradigm through appropriate levels of resistance by professionals, for the benefit of young people. In the Australian context, Te Riele (2006) demonstrates how the discursive construction and use of the 'at risk' label further marginalises young people already 'at the margins' and how alternative discourses and practices should be established. Highlighting the importance of dominant discursive constructions of children and young people, Moss and Petrie (2002) demonstrated that how ideas about children or young people are formed, (particularly by those professional groups dealing with them on a daily basis) has consequences in terms of the design and implementation of service provision and the resulting outcomes for the children and young people targeted. These problematisations of risk assessment and related technologies of working with young people (e.g. behavioural approaches of working with

young people) which is undertaken in such studies in other contexts, is useful to critically interrogate current developments ongoing in the context of the GYDPs.

It is my contention that in the Irish context, there has been a reluctance to put the GYDPs under the microscope for examination, rather they are welcomed as better and less expensive alternatives to the detention of young persons who engage in petty crime (Kilkelly, 2006, 2011; O'Dwyer 2002). However, while this is indeed the case, the aforementioned sources provide clear justification for the critical examination of all community based crime prevention and correction measures as they affect young people. In Ireland, the main diversionary strategy, the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme operated on an informal, non-statutory basis since 1963 until it was put on statutory footing as a result of the Children Act 2001. The lack of research into the operation of this programme has been highlighted as a problematic issue (Kilkelly, 2006). Questions have been raised about its potential net-widening effect, its lack of sufficient safeguards to protect participants from procedural arbitrariness and its possible stigmatising effects (Griffin, 2005; Kilkelly, 2011; O'Dwyer 2006). These questions justify the need to empirically examine all diversionary strategies including the GYDPs.

In addition, the involvement of the youth work sector poses questions which have not been empirically examined in the Irish context. Two thirds of the hundred projects are managed by 13 different youth work organisations (see Appendix 7). While it is not possible to speak of a 'unified' youth work sector in the Irish context working from a set of universally agreed values and practices (see e.g. Geoghegan, 1999; Hurley, 1992, 1999; Jenkinson 2000; Kiely and Kennedy 2005), certain core principles are commonly described to distinguish youth work from other practices of working with young people. These include: the focus on young people's individual needs and their empowerment; young people's personal development and social education in informal settings; young people's voluntary participation in youth work processes and the development of trusting and egalitarian relationships between workers and young people. The increasing involvement of youth work organisations and youth workers in state agendas, such as youth crime prevention, remains a matter of debate in both national as well as other contexts (Davies and Geoghegan, 1999; Hurley, 1992; Jeffs and Smith 2002; Kiely, 2009; McMahon, 2009; Merton, 2009; Treacy, 2009). The crux of the debate here is to what extent the involvement of the sector in this provision compromises youth work principles to such an extent that it moves away from some of its central principles and abandons some of its core modes of practice of working with young people.



To address these knowledge gaps, this thesis seeks to shift the focus from current debates around ‘what works’ in the context of the GYDPs towards an analysis which distils and critically examines the various layers of knowledge which have become dominant in contemporary GYDP policy and practice. By locating this thesis in a post-structuralist theoretical framework and by conducting a genealogical discourse analysis, based on the work of Foucault, this thesis identifies which dominant discourses constitute contemporary GYDP policy and practices and deconstructs their underlying assumptions and presuppositions. It further seeks to contextualise these dominant discourses within wider Irish youth crime prevention policy. It particularly emphasises the most recent reforms of the GYDPs introduced by the IYJS through what I will term in this thesis, in the absence of an official title, the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) in 2009.<sup>3</sup> This ambitious reform agenda provides another reason why this thesis is particularly timely. As will become apparent throughout the analysis conducted for the purpose of this thesis, the new measures introduced in the ‘*Agenda of Change*’ (IYJS, 2009b:61) can be interpreted as technologies of government (Miller and Rose, 2007), which seek to introduce a new rationality to the GYDPs with the effect of producing a fundamentally different type of intervention as well as to align all projects uniformly with these new priorities.

### **Aim of the Study**

Through the adoption of a post-structuralist approach and the insights provided by a ‘governmentality’ framework for social policy analysis, this thesis will provide an alternative narrative to and critique of the current ‘what-works’ focus of youth crime prevention policy and practice in the Irish context. This critique will be built upon the identification and analysis of dominant discourses, as well as the related power/knowledge regimes (Foucault, 1977) that define contemporary youth crime prevention policy and GYDP discourse. To peruse this critique, this thesis conceptualises the field of youth crime prevention as an ‘interdiscursive

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<sup>3</sup>As a result of conducting a *Baseline Analysis* aimed at *Designing Effective Local Responses to Local Youth Crime* (IYJS, 2009b), the IYJS formulated three outcomes which were described as constituting an *Agenda for Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). These outcomes relate to three major innovations. First, it includes the alignment of GYDPs’ work plans and activities to local youth crime statistics. Second, it refers to the introduction of a piloting process through which 5 trial sites were selected to spearhead the envisaged changes to the projects. Third, it involves key changes in relation to assessment procedures for young people, the development of local crime profiles for project planning, and increased training and networking initiatives. The details and implications of these changes are discussed throughout this thesis. On a more technical note, it should be noted that the *Agenda of Change* has been italicised due to the terminology’s central importance in GYDP policy and in the context of this thesis. However, it does not refer to an explicit title of a document.

formation' (Foucault, 1977) i.e. a combination of non-specialist discourses and specialist/scientific discourses made up of different fields of knowledge. As I will show, the identification, explication and deconstruction of discursive strands, will enable a critical analysis as to how different discourses come to exert technological, normalising and ethical power in contemporary 'youth crime prevention' policy and practice such as that underpinning the GYDPs.

The emphasis on a genealogical discourse analysis of official youth crime prevention policy differs significantly from traditional social policy analysis. The focus shifts from identifying the impacts and outcomes of particular interventions towards identifying how different discourses come to define a knowledge field such as youth crime prevention and in this way produce different discursive as well as material effects. In addition, a detailed analysis of the assumptions underlying discourses can reveal 'that what may appear as a benign or positive policy may also have complex and contradictory effects' (Watson, 2000: 75).

Finally, the study will trace and analyse through the discursive analysis of project workers' and Juvenile Liaison Officers'<sup>4</sup> (hereafter JLOs) discursive engagement with dominant policy discourses, how these are translated in local contexts. In doing this, close attention is paid to how project workers and JLOs deploy different strategies of accommodation and resistance to official policy discourses. By paying particular attention throughout as to how young people are constructed and their offending behaviour is understood in official discourses and how these are deployed by project workers and JLOs, the thesis identifies how youth crime prevention discourse opens and limits possibilities for engaging with young people in local contexts. In doing this, the overall contribution of this thesis is to also challenge some of the longstanding assumptions made on young people and their offending behaviour, and to stimulate debates about ways of working with young people in state defined agendas such as youth crime prevention.

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<sup>4</sup>Juvenile Liaison Officers are specially trained members of An Garda Síochána who are primarily involved in the operation of the Garda Diversion Programme and one of the main referral sources to the GYDPs.

## **Central Research Questions**

To achieve the overall aim of this thesis, the following central research questions have been formulated in line with post-structuralist approaches to social policy analysis:

1. What are the dominant discourse strands defining the interdiscursive field of contemporary official youth crime prevention policy broadly as well as official GYDP policy more specifically?
2. How are these dominant discursive constructions, derived from official youth crime prevention policy, mobilised by project workers and JLOs?
3. What other discourses are most often drawn upon by project workers and JLOs in conceptualising youth crime prevention practice, young people and their offending behaviour?
4. What are the underlying assumptions of these dominant discourses deployed in official youth crime prevention policy, as well as by project workers and JLOs, particularly in relation to young people, their offending behaviour and interventions?
5. To what extent is GYDP discourse and practice in its construction of the 'youth justice worker' moving away from some of the fundamentals of youth work, which significantly oriented GYDP practice from the outset?
6. What is less talked about or obscured in the discursive constructions deployed in GYDP discourses and practice and what alternative possibilities arise from these constellations in terms of thinking about youth crime prevention, young people and offending behaviour?

I will now take each one of these research questions in turn, and elaborate their role in shaping the thesis.

### **Research Question 1: Dominant discourse strands of official youth crime prevention and GYDP policy**

The first research question aims to identify the dominant discursive strands which are constitutive of contemporary youth crime prevention and GYDP policy. Based on post-structuralist approaches and insights gleaned from governmentality literature in social policy analysis, youth crime prevention policy is not conceived of as response to a concrete social

problem. Instead, the research examines how policy discourses are constituted through different 'positivities of knowledge' (Foucault, 1972:214) which are repeated according to particular regularities or 'systems of formation' (Foucault, 1972:205) and in this way achieve 'truth' status (Foucault, 1976). For Bacchi (2009:55) the identification and tracing of the positivities of knowledge constitutes the first step in her analytical framework of critical policy analysis. She observes that 'problem representations' contained in official policy texts need to be made explicit so that the analysis can interrogate 'what' and 'who' is perceived as a problem and how regulation and problem resolution of these issues is envisaged. Given the largely uncontested role of prevention and diversion in contemporary Irish youth justice policy, this research argues that it is essential to question how young people, their offending behaviour and interventions to address this are thought about, or 'problematized' (Bacchi, 2009:31). Stenson notes more specifically in his conceptualisation of crime control strategies as a form of governmentality, how these interventions:

'...forge new ways to make populations thinkable and measurable for the purposes of liberal government...The everyday processes of public government, the exercise of publicly financed and organized power, are underpinned by censuses, official and academic surveys of social problems in myriad forms. These do not simply describe the world, they also create- in this policy field- their own regimes of what count as the accredited 'truths' about the nature, causes and remedies for crime' (Stenson, 1991:236).

Located in this general approach, this first research question requires that dominant discourses of official youth crime prevention and GYDP policy are identified and traced. This will be enabled through a close reading of 'discourse fragments' (Jaeger and Meier, 2009: 47) of a range of official government texts which deal with young people and criminal justice, and youth crime prevention. With a particular focus on the synchronic dimension of various discourse strands, this first research question involves the examination of '...the finite spectrum of what is said and sayable at a particular point in time' (Jaeger and Meier, 2009:46) in relation to young people, offending behaviour and the prevention of offending behaviour. In doing so, the 'archive' of youth crime prevention will be described and the links between the 'sayable and the visible' will be made explicit, with particular attention paid to identifying which themes (or 'topics') emerge, in what order and what is omitted.

## **Research Question 2: Project workers and JLOs involvement with official dominant discourses**

The second research question focuses on the identification of how the dominant discourses promoted in official policy texts are mirrored, resisted, or appropriated in project workers' and JLOs' discursive practices. One of the main critiques raised against the use of a 'governmentality' framework for policy analysis is its focus on discursive analysis of textual materials at the expense of an investigation of lived experience and social practice (O'Malley et al., 1997; Stenson 1998). However a body of literature has emerged which demonstrates how a fruitful connection between discursive social policy analysis on the one hand and empirical investigations of different types of professional practice conducted by those addressed through these policies can take place (see e.g. Elm-Larson, 2004; Healy, 2000; Marston 2004), without losing the critical distance which a governmentality framework can offer. Rose (1999:48) termed the mechanism between official discourse issued by central government and actual implementation in distinct sites as 'translation' or 'translation mechanisms' emphasising that '...a plan, policy or programme is not merely 'realized' in each of these locales, nor is it a matter of an order issued centrally being executed locally. What is involved here is something more complex'. The concept of 'translation mechanisms' will be used to conceptualise project workers' and JLOs' engagement with dominant discourses as an important junction for analysis. Here, I will consider how discourses promoted and associated rationalities envisaged by policy makers, take on diverse and particular shapes in their local contexts. In this vein, I will consider for example how the rationality of including young people and their families in youth crime prevention works as an inclusionary strategy, may operate as a means of subjectifying project participants and their family members and possibly reinforce classed and stereotypical images of young people engaged in the GYDPs and their families.

In the analysis of project workers' and JLO's discursive engagement with dominant project discourses, the thesis will also consider broader strategies of resistance deployed by project workers and JLOs. Contrary to the anti-humanist critique of post-structuralism, i.e. that the individual disappears and has no influence over the way that dominant discourses exert influence over their subject positions, the stance adopted in this thesis is that 'discourses can be seen as 'assets' for re-problematisation' (Bacchi, 2009:19). Thus, the analysis of the diversity, complexity and sometimes contradictory ways of relating to dominant discourses,

demonstrates how an engagement with dominant discourses can produce alternative discourses.

### **Research Question 3: Moving beyond official discourses**

In further acknowledgement of project workers' and JLOs' agency, this research question addresses more specifically the variety of dominant discourses, often reaching beyond those promoted in official policy documents, which are drawn upon by project workers and JLOs in their constructions of young people, their offending behaviour and interventions to address this behaviour. As mentioned before, youth crime prevention can be conceptualised as inter-discourse, which is made up through 'everyday discourse', such as the public perception of and worry over youth crime; of specialist discourses located in the sciences, such as cognitive psychology; discourses located in the human sciences, such as the law; and finally interdiscursively dominated specialist discourses, such as youth work, social work or criminology. This research question seeks to tease out this variety of different types of discourses emerging in project workers' and JLOs' narratives.

Both this and the previous research question also investigate the discursive effects of dominant discourses (both official ones and other dominant ones). Bacchi usefully defines discursive effects as 'those created by the limits imposed on what can be thought or said within particular problem representations' (Bacchi, 2009: 69). Through producing particular truths, dominant discourses make others unspeakable and unthinkable and these effects are traced systematically in this thesis. For example, it is possible to show how the emphasis on evidence-based interventions in the context of contemporary GYDP policy and practice closes off alternative practices with young people, some of which could be based on more creative and intuitive approaches.

More specifically, this as well as the previous research question also focus on the identification of the related subjectifying and objectifying effects dominant discourses. In line with social constructionist and post-structuralist approaches to the individual the close analysis of dominant discourses will show how young people are objectified in varied and complex ways. This is closely related to young people's (and their families) subjectification, i.e. how objectifying discourses are manifested through concrete practices. Rose (1990: 41) notes that the history of the subjects of government is

‘...a little, variegated, multiple history of the objectifications of the human being within the discourses that would govern them, and their subjectification in diverse practices and techniques. Are we to be governed as members of a flock to be led, as children to be coddled and educated, as a human resource to be exploited, as members of a population to be managed, as legal subjects with rights, as responsible citizens of an interdependent society, as autonomous individuals with your own illimitable aspirations, as value-driven members of a moral community...’.

Thus, research questions two and three, also deal with analysing how different discourses function in terms of creating objects of knowledge. By making explicit the bodies of knowledge that are drawn upon in speaking ‘objects of knowledge’ into existence as well as identifying technologies of government devised to ‘operationalise’ these different knowledge regimes to govern subjects, this thesis demonstrates how power is wielded and dispersed throughout the youth crime prevention landscape. For example, the analysis shows how young people are constituted through particular understandings of adolescence which are problematising and pathologising.

#### **Research Question 4: Underlying assumptions and presuppositions of discourse strands**

The fourth research question pays attention to the underlying assumptions and presuppositions of identified dominant discourses deployed in official policy discourse as well as drawn upon by project workers and JLOs. In doing this, the focus is placed on analysing how specific discourses come into being, by looking closely at which knowledge constructions are taken for granted and in what ways they are presented and positioned. Categories such as for example ‘young person at risk’ will be conceptualised as designations which seek to order reality and to systematise interventions, and which hence need to be ‘unpacked’ (Alvesson, 2002:90). The proposition that will be examined is that discursive categories which can have inclusionary or exclusionary effects can be made visible through analysis. Here, insights from governmentality scholars (e.g. Dean 1999; Rose 2000) are particularly helpful to conceptualise how rationalities are used to make certain populations or issues governable and amenable for intervention. This analytical strategy is particularly deployed in considering how young people are constructed through a range of problematisations in official policy discourses which are amenable to interventions of a particular kind. Finally, by conducting a deconstructive reading of how the ideal type of young person and family is imagined through official youth crime

prevention policy, the research pays specific attention to the understandings and constructions of young people, offending behaviour and youth crime prevention, which are partly contradictory in themselves (e.g. young people described as victims of their minds and bodies as well as in full control of their behaviour at the same time) and partly across categories (e.g. young people conceptualised as adolescents and undergoing hormonal changes, yet behavioural training emphasised as a prevention strategy).

#### **Research Question 5: Tracing the shift from youth work to youth justice work**

A central question posed by this research is to explore to what extent it is justified to speak of the emergence of a new type of practice of working with young people, taking hold in the context of the GYDPs. Thus particular attention is being paid to identify through the detailed analysis of both official GYDP discourse as well as through project workers and JLOs' discursive practices, to what extent, these are drawing on what could be described as core principles of youth work. Typically, these would include the focus on the individual young person's needs, young people's voluntary and active participation in youth work settings, the emphasis of the egalitarian relationship between youth workers and young people, and finally the contribution towards young people's personal development, as well as their critical social education. A second element of focus under this research question is to analyse the ways through which both official project discourse as well as project workers' and JLOs' discourses favoured alternative discourses, drawing upon other professional fields such as social work, psychology, law, etc. in their descriptions of their work with young people.

In the Irish context, the implications of the involvement of youth workers in settings such as the GYDPs have been researched to a limited extent and showed differential outcomes (Bowden, 2006). Similarly, international literature which investigates implications of inter-agency collaboration in youth justice settings on professional cultures more generally (Burnett and Appleton, 2004; Souhami, 2007) and more specifically in the context of youth work practice (Davies and Merton, 2009), has also shown complex and variegated findings. While it is acknowledged that youth work in itself is an inter-discursive construction, made up of different professional and non-expert discourses, the aim of this research question is to critically question the involvement of the Irish youth work sector in a state led agenda such as youth crime prevention.



The tracing of discursive effects is particularly pertinent when considering this research question in relation to analysing project workers' and JLOs' engagement with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). In their response to the reforms entailed in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), project workers in particular take on particular understandings of their professional identity in relation to working with young people, assembling it from a variety of dominant discourses, as well as alternative ones. To a certain extent, the impact of 'lived effects' (Dean, 2006) is also investigated as part of this research question. In a social policy context, these 'lived effects' are understood as dealing with the 'material impact of problem representations' (Bacchi, 2009:17). These 'lived effects' come to the fore when analysing how project workers and JLOs described the direct and material impacts of the official project discourse practice in their daily work with young people.

### **Research Question 6: Gaps, silences and alternatives**

The final research question addressed in this thesis seeks to analyse how dominant problem representations silence alternatives that become 'unthinkable' or 'unspeakable'. Throughout the analysis of policy and interview texts, attention is also paid to the gaps and silences I detected in the conceptualisation of youth crime prevention, as well as in relation to young people and their offending behaviour. Bacchi (2009:13) defines the objective of the focus on gaps and alternative discourses as raising 'for reflection and consideration issues and perspectives that are silenced in identified problem representations'. Throughout this thesis for example, I demonstrate repeatedly how socio-economic and structural explanations of offending behaviour are obscured by individualising discourses of young people and their offending behaviour.

The remainder of this chapter now deals with situating this study within its theoretical framework of post-structuralist social policy analysis. The aim of this section is to demonstrate how this theoretical approach has shaped the thesis in its entirety from the initial formulation of research questions to the practical formulation of interview questions as well as the framework for analysis. This section also considers the contribution which the adoption of a 'governmentality' framework makes to this thesis.

## **Post-structuralism, governmentality and social policy analysis**

To address the aim of this research, I have located this study within the framework of post-structuralist social theory more generally and more specifically within the notion of governmentality. The latter notion, developed on the basis of Foucault's terminology (Foucault, 1979) denotes a mode of analysis which seeks to distil and analyse government rationalities, i.e. ways of thinking and acting upon 'free' individuals and which according to Foucault has become the predominant avenue for exercising power in liberal societies. An increasing body of contemporary literature has further developed the notion of governmentality (see e.g. Dean 1999; Miller and Rose 1990, 1992, 1996, 2007; Stenson 1999) while others have drawn upon and applied these insights to contemporary social policy analysis (see Ball 1990; Bacchi 2009; Marston 2004). The following section explains how the study is underpinned by post-structuralist social theory in the context of its methodological approach and its mode of analysis. Second, it focuses on how a governmentality lens can contribute to analysing contemporary youth crime prevention and GYDP policy and practice. Finally, it also addresses some of the important critiques raised in relation to the contribution of post-structuralism and governmentality to social policy analysis. In its entirety, this section shows how the perspective adopted demands questions to be asked in very particular ways, laying bare forms of knowledge which have previously not been interrogated in the context of Irish youth crime prevention policy and in relation to the GYDPs.

### **Post-structuralism: core concepts**

Post-structuralist social theory can not be defined as a unitary and coherent school of thought, rather it is best interpreted as '...a cross-disciplinary movement in the humanities and social sciences, having the greatest impact on linguistics, ethnography, anthropology and literary criticism' (Nealon and Giroux, 2003:131). Historically, post-structuralism can be understood as a response to a 'long series of philosophical ideas' (Williams, 2005:7), not least as a response to and break with structuralism. Emerging in the French intellectual landscape of the 1970s, through the work of philosophers such as Lyotard (1983), Derrida (1978) and Foucault (1976, 1977, 1979) post-structuralism posits several radical claims in relation to the status of truth and knowledge. Due to its breadth and variety, this short overview is limited to what can be considered the four main threads running through post-structuralist literature, highlighting

how they contribute to the conceptualisation of this thesis.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, these selected themes focus on historical scepticism, on the role of knowledge and truth claims, the specific take on language and discourse, and finally the post-structuralist conceptualisation of identity and subjectivity, including resistance. Each of these themes demands a re-thinking of social policy analysis more generally and anchors the analysis undertaken in this thesis in this specific theoretical context.

### **Historical scepticism**

Through its 'historical scepticism', post-structuralism encourages interrogations of seemingly progressive developments in different contexts. Lyotard (1983) famously declared that since 'progressive' political projects such as the Enlightenment, emancipation and progress had failed, it was no longer possible to talk of these 'meta-narratives' (Lyotard, 1983) which according to him lost their validity, to explain social conditions at the end of the twentieth century. Science and technology as well as progressive politics had revealed their dark side so that 'it is no longer possible to call development progress' (Lyotard 1992:91-92). Foucault's development of Nietzsche's genealogical concept (Foucault, 1977) which presented a revisionist history of penal reform is a prime example of the application of historical scepticism. In *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977) Foucault famously traced the development and deployment of disciplinary and regulatory technologies replacing harsher forms of punishment in eighteenth century France to show how these constituted an extension and dispersal of control throughout society. Rose (1999: 22) effectively summarised how these new disciplinary regimes described by Foucault, entail a new character:

'But discipline seeks to reshape the ways in which each individual, at some future point, will conduct him-or herself in a space of regulated freedom. Discipline is bound to the emergence and transformation of new knowledges of the human soul. And discipline is constitutively linked to the emergence of new ways of thinking about the tasks of political rule in terms of the government of the conduct of the population, or at least of those sections and zones which have forfeited their claims to be contractual subjects of law or have not yet acquired that right - criminals, paupers, lunatics, children.

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<sup>5</sup> For diverse definitions of post-structuralism, see for example: Best and Kellner 1991; Smart, 1992.

Other revisionist accounts of penal reform followed in the same vein. In *Visions of Social Control* (1985) Stanley Cohen argued that the new forms of seemingly more benign punishment in the community as well as the idea of prevention invented in the Anglo-American context in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, did not necessarily result in a decrease of the network of surveillance and social control.

He warned that processes such as ‘blurring’, ‘masking’ and ‘widening’, contributed to the spread and deepening of the new crime agendas.<sup>6</sup> These processes would demand the adoption of historical scepticism: ‘...the conventional view of correctional change in general and of the emergence of the prison...is based on a simple minded idealist view of history’ (Cohen, 1985:15). Similarly, in *Culture of Social Control* (2001), David Garland argued that the increased demand on ‘the community’ to participate in crime prevention and policing as a ‘responsibilisation strategy’ was deliberately designed to extend surveillance and control over populations, rather than promote a progressive move towards citizen involvement. Analysing the development of the prison system in the United States from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, Rothman warned that ‘...we cannot forget that designs that promise the most grandiose results often legitimate the most unsatisfactory methods’ (Rothman, 1995: 129). Similarly, in their discussion of the emergence of actuarialist justice as part of what they term ‘New Penology’<sup>7</sup> (Feeley and Simon, 1992) in US criminal law, they suggest that rather than providing avenues of ‘more effective’ delivery of justice, it represented an acceptance and way of managing an ‘underclass’ (Feeley and Simon, 1994). Informed broadly by these critical observations, recent analyses of youth justice, particularly in relation to the ever increasing usage of the ‘risk-factor’ approach have developed this sceptical approach to youth justice reform. Rather than representing a progressive move towards more ‘evidence-based’ and ‘objective’ interventions with young people, this body of literature shows how the risk-factor approach represents new ways of governing and possibly also stigmatising young people (see e.g. Armstrong, 2006; Gray 2007, 2011; France 2008; Kelly, 2007).

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<sup>6</sup> These processes described by Cohen (1985) refer to possible consequences of new forms of crime control and penology. For example, he described as ‘blurring of boundaries’ the unintentional move of boundaries taking place through for example diversionary programmes. Whereas the prison physically implied clear geographical boundaries in a particular setting, offenders can now be dealt with in numerous locations (in youth club like settings or GYDPs for example). He did not argue that this movement was per-se a negative one, but warned that boundary blurring could go either way.

<sup>7</sup> In what they termed the ‘new penology’, Feeley and Simon (1992) developed a framework which sought to describe how penal strategies have moved from punishing individual offenders towards administering groups of dangerous populations, based on the calculation of aggregate data. These broader shifts, which they observed both in discursive as well as material practices, facilitated according to them the spread of ‘actuarialist’ techniques, such as those applied in the risk factor prevention paradigm.

As such, 'historical scepticism' in general, as well as the revisionist accounts of penal reform and youth justice reform more specifically offer important insights for this thesis. Rather than thinking of youth crime prevention policy as a coherent political project, the result of an analysis of the deployment of various knowledges, rationalities and technologies in the interplay with specific local contexts, allows an interrogation of previously unquestioned policies and practices. In developing this approach, the thesis also moves beyond the discussion along the narratives of the justice-welfare continuum and offers a richer and more complex description of policy discourses, rationalities and practices.

### **Knowledge and truth claims**

A second key theme central to post-structuralist thinking is scepticism relating to all forms of knowledge and truth claims. This posits that it is impossible to ever arrive at such secure knowledge, 'the core' of social reality or any concrete phenomenon (Sondergaard, 2002). Rather, the limits and exceptions to knowledge or to social reality are as important and have to be investigated, uncovered and made explicit. Strictly speaking however, even these limits cannot be traced in their pure forms: 'The limit is an ungraspable thing that can only be approached through its function of disruption and change in the core' (Williams, 2005:3). Poststructuralists, are as a consequence, sceptical of universal claims to truth and knowledge and are bound to critically analyse the foundations and knowledge forms underlying modern science.<sup>8</sup>

According to Foucault truth claims become an interest object of study, not for their assumed rejection of reality, but for their production of social and cultural effects and thereby for their inductions of regular effects of power (Foucault, 1979). In his analysis of discourses of educational paradigms, O'Sullivan developed the notion of a 'doxic paradigm' - based on Bourdieu's (1977) notion of 'doxa'- which usefully describes how truth claims come to exert power, namely through their very ubiquity and unquestioned status: 'A doxic paradigm is a the ultimate in dominion in that not alone does it penetrate all aspects of life and all agents but there is no awareness of another reality outside of it' (O'Sullivan, 2005:38).

This scepticism towards knowledge and truth claims becomes very clearly pronounced when thinking about how our world in general and more specifically in terms of how social policy is

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<sup>8</sup> A prime example is Bruno Latour's work on the *Pasteurization of France* (1984).

described through 'categories' which seek to describe people, their needs and interventions. Hacking (1991) showed in his analysis of the history of statistics how concepts and classifications 'make up' people and social facts rather than merely describe 'reality': 'The bureaucracy of statistics imposes not just by creating administrative rulings but by determining classifications within which people must think of themselves' (Hacking, 1991:194). Categories and concepts thus have 'significant effects for the ways in which governing takes place, and for how people come to think about themselves and about others' (Bacchi, 2009:9).

The role of the social scientific researcher in promoting and further developing such 'regimes of truth' is not to be underestimated.<sup>9</sup> In the context of youth studies more generally, Kelly (2007, 2011) challenges this role of 'new class intellectuals' of academics, youth researchers and professionals, and encourages to conceive of alternatives outside the dominant 'youth-at-risk' paradigm. By deconstructing knowledge and truth claims posited in official youth crime prevention and GYDP policy throughout this thesis, it urges us to start thinking outside the currently dominant paradigms in relation to young people and offending.

### **Language and discourse**

Post-structuralism also accords central importance to the role of language and discourse in constructing social reality. This emphasis on 'textualism' (Crook, 2001:311) represents one of the influential themes of postmodernism more generally and should be considered as part of the wider linguistic turn in philosophy and social analysis (Lemert 1997:80). In the 1970s, the linguistic turn had developed out of French structuralism and drew attention to language as a structuring agent.<sup>10</sup> In linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure proposed that the meanings of words were derived from their differential relationship to other words, not because they referred to a particular object with specific attributes. He argued that it was this link between a 'signifier' (a word) and the 'signified' (a social concept/practice/construct) which made symbolic acts understandable (de Saussure, 1974).

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<sup>9</sup> Rose outlines that in modern strategies of government, government has 'both fostered and depended upon the vocation of 'experts of truth' and the functioning of their concepts of normality and pathology, danger and risk, social order and social control, and the judgements and devices which such concepts have inhabited' (Rose, 1999:30).

<sup>10</sup> In French Structuralism, 'discourse was introduced as the underlying deep structure of the human mind (Levi-Strauss) or the human psyche (Lacan)' (from Diaz- Bone et al. 2007:2).

While post-structuralists agree with the premise of structuralism, that reality is a 'cultural construct', the argument goes –in square opposition to structuralists- that both the signifier and the signified are arbitrary, without a structural connection between the two. Language, according to poststructuralist thinking, does not constitute a coherently closed system, but rather a 'radically indeterminate universe in which the relationship between words and their referents is laced with difference through and through' (MacLure, 2003:176). This has resulted in a strong emphasis put on critical analysis of language and discourse in post-structuralist thought.

The specific understanding of 'discourse' analysis depends on the respective intellectual lineage.<sup>11</sup> In general terms, post-structuralist approaches to discourse have to be distinguished from those based on positivist epistemologies rooted for example in Anglo-American linguistics. In the latter, language is viewed as a 'sense-making apparatus' for some 'objective' world out there. As a consequence, linguistic types of discourse analysis adopt a micro-perspective on language and are typically interested in the structure and meaning of texts and in 'what people actually say and do' (MacLure 2003: 182). In its pure form, post-structuralist discourse analysis also stands in contrast to the humanist claim that language analysis can offer insights and meanings into some internal reality or identity.

Discourse in post-structuralism then goes beyond a mere language-based phenomenon to an understanding of discourse as a set of 'practices for producing meaning, forming subjects and regulating conduct within particular societies and institutions, at particular histories in time' (MacLure, 2003: 175). I will return to the specific Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse, which weaves together the concepts of knowledge-power and discursive effects, and which has been employed in this thesis in chapter 2.

### **Identity and subjectivity**

Closely related to the centrality of language and discourse is the construction of the human subject in post-structuralism. It depends on the specific theorist however in post-structuralism generally, the human subject is viewed as an effect of, or at least strongly constituted by or constrained within discourse (Rosenau, 1992). The subject is understood as always in the

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<sup>11</sup> See MacLure (2003) for a concise comparison of Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis and Foucauldian Discourse analysis. For a good overview on Critical Discourse Analysis, see: Wodak, and Meyer (Eds.) (2009).

process of becoming, as being shaped in a multitude of ways by different discourses. Discourses produce specific subject positions or subjectivities which individuals take on, reject, or modify in specific circumstance: 'One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that is to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework' (Foucault, 1980:117). The human being is conceptualised not as a pre-existing entity, but only manifests itself through discourse: 'Subjects are the punctuation of discourse, and provide the bodies on and through which discourse may act' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 53).

The adoption of this perspective opens ways for critically thinking about and analysing how human beings are governed in all sorts of practices, including 'liberatory' ones. Rose (1990) notes this for example in his analysis of the invention of the psychological self: 'The very psychological theories and practices promoted by 'progressive' critics of 'adaptionist' psychology....in elaborating techniques that enhance subjectivity through self-inspection and self-rectification, have underpinned the ways in which subjectivity has become connected to networks of power' (Rose, 1990: xxvii). Bacchi (2009) suggests that in the context of social policy analysis, such a perspective on the constitution of subject positions through discourse is easy to conceive. She notes '...the suggestion that policies such as child-care policy or its lack, for example, modify our behaviours and our thoughts about when to start a family seems fairly uncontentious...' (Bacchi, 2009:16).

Through the course of this research, the issues of subjectivity and subject positions made available through official discourse emerged not only relation to young people and their offending behaviour, but also in relation to project workers' engagement with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) and its influence over different professional identities as expressed by project workers in interviews. Consequently, a clarification in relation to the respective usage of the terms 'subjectivity' and 'identity' is important.

Although both terms are used in discourse analysis and are conceptually linked, they have distinct intellectual lineages. The term identity is more closely related to concepts drawn from social psychology, whereas subjectivity is rooted in post-structuralist theorising (Marston, 2004). For the purpose of understanding project worker's engagement with the *Agenda of Change*, it was useful to conceptualise the relationship between subjectivity and identity where: 'identity is perhaps best understood as a limited and temporary fixing for the individual



of a particular mode of subjectivity as apparently what one *is*' (Weedon, 2004:19). This definition also highlights that while identity can be integrative, it is also varied and fragmented (Giddens 1999: 417). This conceptualisation has been usefully developed by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) in the context of professional identity formation. Their conceptualisation highlights how professional self-identity is constructed through a dual process. On the one hand from the 'top': particular subjectivities are made available to individuals and encouraged to be taken up, as part of an effort to achieve 'identity regulation' on behalf of management. And on the other hand, from 'below': 'individuals undertake efforts with these available subjectivities ('identity work') through which a temporarily and situationally limited identity is achieved' (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:627).

This understanding of this constitutive relationship between discourse and subjects in combination with the focus on project workers' active roles in performing 'identity work' is particularly useful for this thesis as it supports an analysis focused on the creation of subject positions in official discourse on the one hand, and project workers' and JLOs' engagement with these, both as a result of their subjection to technologies of government ('governmentality'), as well as their personal agency in drawing on certain discourses. It also corresponds with the pragmatic approach to interview analysis (see chapter 2) adopted in this thesis and also leaves space for conceptualising how 'resistance' can be performed in the process of organisational transformations such as seen in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61).

### **Conceptualising resistance**

The anti-humanist critique of Foucault (see e.g Hall 1996; Rosenau 1992:43) is not uncontested as such. Building on Foucault's concept of bio-power and the associated potential of resistance through alternative images of the self, Butler for example (1997:14) suggests that power acts on the subject, depending on what subjects take on and re-iterate in their 'own' acting. Similarly, Gordon sees Foucault's further development of biopower and biopolitics in connection with the theme of government as his 'solution' to the anti-humanist critique so as to demonstrate how 'governmental practice can be turned around into focuses of resistance' (Gordon 1991:5). Subjects are hence not mere puppets, playing their part in the execution of discourse. Kendall and Wickham (1999:53) also suggest that subjects are not accorded a passive role in Foucault's theoretical framework: 'This is not to say that Foucault disavows an

active role for subjects; far from it. Subjects are active in producing themselves as subjects in the sense of *subjected to power*.’<sup>12</sup>

Others remain more critical with regards to Foucault’s theoretical contribution to the constitution of an active subject and as a consequence seek to create alternatives. Rosenau (1992) for example coined the term ‘affirmative’ postmodernism where the intentionally acting subject is given a role in explaining resistance. For others, this led to the creation of their particular approaches to discourse analysis (see e.g. van Dijk 1993 or Fairclough 1992). Others again, suggest that an added level of theorising is necessary within a Foucauldian framework to allow for the ‘resistant’ subject and to close the ‘gap’ between discourse and reality (Jaeger and Maier 2009:43). Jaeger (1999) for example draws on the Russian psychologist Leontjev’s activity theory<sup>13</sup> to do this. Marston (2004:46) on the other hand suggests that Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’<sup>14</sup> could fill this gap: ‘Discourses themselves offer more than one subject position, through which agency can be expressed in resisting, modifying or appropriating these positions. Understanding subjectivity from the ‘bottom up’ requires perspectives in addition to Foucault’.

Bacchi (2009:45) suggests the more pragmatic view: that discourses themselves offer resources for re-problematisations (2009:45). Here, she highlights how the plurality, complexity, and sometimes inconsistency of discourses offer opportunities for challenging and questioning what often appear as dominant and unquestioned discourses. In this research, this became particularly apparent through project workers’ and JLOs’ conscious interaction with and questioning of dominant discourses throughout this research process. The approach adopted in this thesis follows this pragmatic solution, not least because in terms of resistance to official discourses, the thesis is primarily interested to analyse the ways project workers engage with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61).

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<sup>12</sup> It was in Foucault’s essay *Subject and Power* (Foucault, 1982), in which he ‘enhanced and reconceptualized his concept of power in order to address criticisms, which claimed he ignored the concept human agency in his analysis. Foucault now stressed the fundamental role of the active subject as the entity through which power is exercised through an in-depth exploration on the effects of governmentality’ (Eisler, 2007: 113).

<sup>13</sup> Leontjev’s activity theory (1977) is based on materialistic psychology of the 1930s and sought to explain under what conditions individuals act and translate motives or thoughts into action. According to Jaeger and Maier (2009:43) ‘the approach is fruitful because it connects subject and object, society and objective reality, through human activity’.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of ‘habitus’ refers to how activities and experiences of everyday life are acquired through lifestyles, values or dispositions of social groups, e.g. of project workers and JLOs.

Useful insights into project workers' and JLOs' discursive strategies of resistance to dominant discourses could be gleaned from literature which has focused on analysing workers' resistance from a post-structuralist perspective (e.g. Ashcraft 2005; Collinson 2000; Hardt & Negri, 2004; Prasad and Prasad, 2000; Thomas and Davies, 2005). Mumby explains the growth of this body of work as 'a response to the perceived neglect of employee subjects as agents...' which represents '...a means not only for exploring the positivity of power (in Foucault's sense) but also of conceptualizing agency as positive and productive, and more than simply a result of the reactivity of 'subject effects' (2005:32).

Scholars within this tradition then explore concrete strategies of how discursive resistance takes place in organisational settings, particularly in situations where management changes are introduced. This body of literature is particularly useful in terms of investigating different strategies of resistance used particularly by project workers, confronted with the various changes introduced by the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). In their analysis of New Public Management (NPM) reforms in the UK public service context, Thomas and Davies (2005:690) show for example 'how individuals draw on alternative subject positions in asserting their identities in the organization, motivated by the difference between the subject positions offered within NPM and individual interest'. Their findings are complex and multi-dimensional and generate some useful insights for this thesis: first, they demonstrate how challenging one subject position involves constructing alternatives and thus resistance is not only 'oppositional' but also 'generative'. Second, they show how resistance can also mean reification, i.e. to resist a particular subject position also serves to 'reify it, reproducing and legitimizing it in the act of critical reflection' (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 693). Third, they show how resistance can be contradictory and complex by combining 'resistance and accommodation between different subject positions as well as within the same subject position at different periods of time' (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 695).

Collinson (2000) conducted two in-depth case studies of workplace resistance which he observed in two UK organisations during the 1980s. In the first case study, he investigated how workers in a private heavy vehicle manufacturing company in the north-west of England, engaged with new initiatives aimed at increasing employee confidence. In the second case study, he focused on an insurance company where he looked how a female employee in an insurance company was 'overlooked' for promotion, shortly after she had announced her pregnancy. Drawing out some of the similarities between the two case studies, Collinson

(2009:29) identifies two key strategies of resistance which he describes both as constituted through power, knowledge/information and subjectivity: 'resistance through distance' and 'extracting information'. Both strategies are in addition to symbolic and physical acts also performed discursively and were facilitated through particular knowledges about self and other factors (e.g. how the organisation works). For example in the case of the heavy vehicle manufacturing company, workers dismissed managers' efforts with derogatory language on the shop floor and showed 'resistance through distance', by reasserting their independence based on gender and class-specific norms. They were not interested in getting involved or to make suggestions about production-related matters, rather they 'steadfastly insisted that management had the full responsibility for managing the enterprise' (Collinson, 2000:40). Ironically, it was particularly this strategy of 'resistance through distance' which produced ambiguous results, partly also 'reinforcing the legitimacy of hierarchical control' (Collinson, 2000:40). In the second case study, Collinson (2000) describes the strategy of resistance through 'persistence' and through 'extracting information'. Collinson shows in detail, how the female employee and trade union representatives used the strategy of 'extracting information' as a tool of resistance to such an extent- that coupled with strategic and political knowledge of workers' rights and the company's internal management structures- led to the overruling of the decision.

In another useful example of employees' resistant strategies, Ashcraft (2005) investigates how the introduction of a new system of crew resource management (CRM) in an airline was dealt with by pilots, whose authority was essentially devolved towards board staff through these changes. Thus, she terms one of the strategies of resistance employed by male pilots, as 'resistance through consent': 'Captains framed CRM as their personal choice or preference, rather than as an institutional mandate imposed on them. Even more, they took literal ownership of the CRM (Ashcraft, 2005:80). In this way, pilots did not overtly resist the introduced changes, but resisted submission towards the new management system, by assuming ownership over it.

Such discursive conceptualisations of resistance strategies were useful in this thesis, as they also considered 'small-scale attempts to disrupt power relations, by drawing attention to a variety of minor acts and rebellions, which might otherwise escape notice' (Marston, 2004: 117). In addition, the particular research setting during interviews (see e.g. also Holt 2009) also served as 'resistant space' for some project workers and JLOs. In his seminal work on resistant

strategies deployed by subordinate groups throughout different historical and political contexts, Scott (1990) developed a detail description of 'hidden transcripts'. He described how various locations, such as theatres or pubs and practices, such as use of dialects, jokes, theatre, anonymity or ambiguity, served as 'hidden transcripts' for oppressed groups. He defined these locations as 'the social sites of the hidden transcript ... in which the unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by relations of domination find a vehement, full-throated expression' (Scott 1990:120). In the context of this research, some project interviews were perceived as sites by project workers and JLOs where the 'hidden transcript', i.e. what was perceived as not sayable in other fora, could be expressed.

### **Governmentality and critical social policy analysis**

Governmentality provides a useful overarching framework to bind together several conceptual ideas which are useful for the critical analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy and the GYDPs. Through its emphasis on governmental rationalities, their translation into technologies or programmes of government, and its close attention to discourse, governmentality allows for the close analysis of the micro-politics of the GYDPs conducted throughout this thesis. Through its integration of the concept of bio-politics as a mode of government it further allows for an extension of the analysis of government beyond the state and its agencies towards professionals such as project workers and JLOs in governing certain populations. Also the critical stance achieved through a governmentality perspective as well as the conceptualisation of power as circular and productive of different effects was of particular importance to this thesis.

The expression 'governmentality' has been termed by Michel Foucault in what have become to be called the 'governmentality lectures' delivered between 1977-1979 at the College de France, where he defined governmentality as the '...ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power' (Foucault, 1979:20).<sup>15</sup> Through tracing how the concept of sovereignty was joined and partly replaced by a new kind of logic, that of 'government', from the late seventeenth century onwards, Foucault developed a particular approach to and analytics of government and the associated 'art to govern' which he coined

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<sup>15</sup> The lecture series was entitled *Security, Territory Population* and featured the lectures: Society Must Be Defended; Security, Territory and Population; The Birth of Bio Politics and 'Governmentality'.

governmentality. Commentators generally differentiate between a historically specific meaning of governmentality as well as a more generic definition (Dean, 2009; Gordon 1991; McKee 2009; Miller and Rose 2008). According to Foucault, 'we live in the era of 'governmentality,' first discovered in the eighteenth century' (Foucault, 1978:103). Through tracing the emergence of 'government' is his definition of governmentality, he opened up the analysis of governmental rationalities as multifarious and possibly also contradictory strategies: 'Government is defined as a right manner of disposing things...' towards achieving '...a plurality of specific aims' (Foucault, 1978: 95). Equally important was his introduction of the terms 'bio-power' and 'biopolitics' through which he described how 'since the eighteenth century, population had appeared as the terrain *par excellence* of government' (Miller and Rose, 2008:27). Through his genealogical analysis of punishment (1977) and sexuality (1976) in particular, Foucault drew attention to how from the eighteenth century, power over life was exercised through the discipline of bio-power: on the one hand over individual bodies which are through the administration of disciplinary technologies shaped into 'docile bodies' as well as through government over entire populations, including the 'increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.' (Foucault, 1978:100). Another aspect highlighted by Foucault in the historical meaning of governmentality related to the triangle of modes of government, including sovereignty-discipline-government. Finally, related to the historical observations on the emergence of governmentality was Foucault's emphasis on the governmentalisation of the state, which de-centres the importance and the unity of the state and views the state as being interested in and exercising 'government' or in other words the 'art of governing'.

Building upon this historically specific understanding of governmentality it is the more generic understanding and further development of governmentality by Foucauldian scholars which is useful for highlighting its conceptual importance for critical social policy analysis. Rose (1999:19) summarised this aptly:

'...Studies of governmentality are studies of a particular 'stratum' of knowing and acting. Of the emergence of particular 'regimes of truth' concerning the conduct of conduct, ways of speaking truth, persons authorized to speak truths, ways of enacting truths and the costs of so doing. Of the invention and assemblage of particular apparatuses and devices for exercising power and intervening upon particular problems. They are concerned, that is to say, with the conditions of possibility and intelligibility for certain ways of seeking to act upon the conduct of

others, or oneself, to achieve certain ends. And their role is diagnostic rather than descriptive: they seek an open and critical relation to strategies of governing, attentive to their presuppositions, their assumptions, their exclusions, their naiveties and their knaveries, their regimes of vision and their spots of blindness’.

In the following, I want to highlight four main threads of ‘governmentality’ which I draw upon in this thesis.

### **Political rationalities and technologies of government**

To work more precisely with Foucault’s notion of ‘political rationalities’, Foucauldian scholars have dissected the term into two related, yet inextricably linked concepts. As part of his ‘analytics of government’, Dean (1999, 2009) differentiates between regimes of practice on the one hand and programmes on the other. ‘Regimes of practice’ refer to particular ways of thinking about problematics which through the application and explication of certain knowledges are made amenable for particular programmes of government. Regimes of practice can be contradictory and competing at times, sometimes subjugating certain forms of knowledge: ‘e.g. the way in which regimes of calculation drawn from accounting and auditing appear increasingly to subsume alternative practices of accountability such as those drawn from professional and collegial norms’ (Dean 2009: 32). Regimes of practice are then ‘made real’ through what he calls ‘explicit programmes’ which are based on particular knowledge accounts based in medicine, criminology, social work, etc.

Similarly, Miller and Rose (1992 and 2008) have usefully developed the differentiation of ‘rationalities’ or ‘programmes’ of government on the one hand and ‘technologies’ on the other. They define rationalities of government as ‘styles of thinking, ways of rendering reality thinkable in such a way that it was amenable to calculation and programming’, whereas they also show how particular knowledges allow for the development of rationalities of government. Experts, professionals and politicians across different government domains concur on certain terminologies or ‘facts’ and render these forms of knowledge into reality, by introducing standardised labels, categories and classifications. Technologies of government then are described as ‘devices, tools, techniques, personnel, materials and apparatuses’ which enable governments and authorities to ‘govern at a distance’ over individuals and groups of people at various different locales (Miller and Rose, 2008:16). As a second and further step,

these forms of knowledge are then put into practice through the introduction of technologies and instruments, allowing government to 'govern at a distance' and to 'steer' rather than 'row' (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). This is facilitated through the application of a number of techniques such as budget control, auditing, monitoring and evaluation; through the dispersal of functions that would previously lie with central government to autonomous entities (such as partnerships, enterprises, communities, professionals and individuals) and finally through a re-calibration of the subject of government into the 'actively responsible-self' (Rose, 1999) where individuals adhere and self-regulate to widely distributed and accepted 'grammars of living' (Rose, 1999). The mentalities of government, based on particular knowledges, and operationalised through concrete programmes, are inextricably linked, but conceptually separated for the sake of analysis.

This then is particularly useful for critical social policy analysis in two ways. First, the importance of 'evaluating' official policy in the traditional sense through identifying 'what works' becomes decentred. Rather the focus is shifted towards analysing on the basis of which rationalities evaluation actually takes place, and has become such a central feature of policy formulation and implementation: 'how authorities and administrators make judgements, the conclusions that they draw from them, the rectifications they propose and the impetus that 'failure' provides for the propagation of new programmes of government' (Miller and Rose, 2007:29).

Second, by tracing and making explicit 'political rationalities', a governmentality approach also shifts the emphasis towards the discursive nature of policy, which becomes both the focus and a means of analysis: 'governmentality has a discursive character: to analyse the conceptualizations, explanations and calculations that inhabit the governmental field requires an attention to language' (Miller and Rose, 2007:29). First, there is a general implication: discourses formulate, carry and establish 'truth claims' which have to be carefully analysed, deconstructed, made explicit and questioned. Discourses also gain particular dominance in particular settings over other discourses, becoming 'dominant' and silencing other discourses, this is what Foucault terms 'subjugated knowledges'.<sup>16</sup> The more specific implication then is that attention is shifted towards 'particular technical devices of writing, listing, numbering and computing that render a realm into discourse as a knowable, and calculable object.... it is

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<sup>16</sup> Foucault differentiates between 'erudite' (buried) knowledges and 'indigenous' knowledges (regional knowledges, surviving at the margins). See Foucault (1980).



through such procedures of inscription that the diverse domains of 'governmentality' are made up, that 'objects' such as the economy, the enterprise, the social field and the family are rendered in a particular conceptual form and made amenable to intervention and regulation' (Miller and Rose, 2007: 30). This linkage between the concepts of governmentality and discourse, which conceptualises the latter not in linguistic terms, but as a set of practices which are productive of knowledge fields and objects, makes discourse analysis in the Foucauldian tradition particularly appropriate for this thesis (see chapter 2). Following this dual explication of 'political rationalities', youth crime prevention policy was conceptualised as drawing upon multiple rationalities, which have been analysed through the discursive analysis of policy texts. These regimes are then put into practice through concrete tools and mechanisms, which have also been analysed as an extension of these rationalities. This thesis then added another layer to this conceptualisation of political rationalities, by investigating how rationalities were reflected in project workers' and JLO's discursive practices.

### **Government beyond the state**

Foucault's development of a theory of governmentality also partly reacted to critics from the Marxist left who suggested that the attention to 'micro-politics' and 'practices' 'failed to address or shed light on the global issue of politics, namely the relations between society and the state (see Gordon, 1991). Foucault's response to this challenge highlights that he did not necessarily see a decreased importance of the state in governance, but that he suggested a different type of analytical lens shifting attention from the state as an institution towards the state as governing through practices: 'What does it mean, to govern a ship? It means clearly to take charge of sailors, but also of the boat and its cargo; to take care of the ship means also to reckon with winds, rocks and storms; and it consists in that activity of establishing a relation between the sailors who are to be taken care of and the ship which is to be taken care of, and the cargo which is brought safely to port, and all those eventualities like winds, rocks, storms and so on; this is what characterizes the government of a ship' (Foucault, 1991: 94). This approach then was manifested for example in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) where he focused on the change of practices and regimes of punishment, rather than on institutional change.

Reflecting on the development of their governmentality approach and its application in a variety of settings over the past two decades, Miller and Rose (2008) confirm the de-centring

of the state in policy analysis as one of the particular strengths of this approach. This for them does not mean a denial of the continuing importance of the state in policy formulation and delivery, but through its emphasis on 'governing practices', includes and maps out the 'multiple centres of calculation and authority that traverse and link up personal, social and economic life... including 'non-state' modes of exercise of power' (Miller and Rose, 2008:20). In her comparison with the 'network governance approach' to social policy, Bacchi (2009) draws attention to another insight of this particular feature of governmentality: less direct government in society would not mean less governing. Indeed, recent commentaries on neo-liberal (or advanced liberal) governmentality have highlighted how endeavours to devolve autonomy and responsibility from the state to an active citizenry represent a form of 'regulated freedom' in which the subject's capacity for action is used as a political strategy to secure the ends of government (Rose 1999). Particularly relevant for this thesis, the concept of governmentality also allows for an examination of the ways through which various professionals and the voluntary youth work sector participate in the governance of 'youth crime prevention'.

### **Foucault and power**

The Foucauldian notion of power is both central to the conceptualisation of discourse- and is discussed in chapter 2 in relation to knowledge- as well his notion of governmentality. In the context of the latter, Foucault focused on four essential features of power: 'power should be regarded as multiple, positive, productive and relational' (Dean, 2001: 325). As opposed to other social theories of power based on Hobbesian visions of power, power in Foucault's conceptualisation is not possessed by anyone in particular, but weaves its net through the entire social body: 'power acts through the smallest elements: the family, sexual relations, but also residential relations, neighbourhoods etc....we always find power as something which 'runs through' it, that acts, that brings about effects' (Foucault, 1978:59). In conceptualising power as multiple rather than emanating from one source, critical social policy analysis shifts its focus towards the analysis of power to local sites such as the GYDPs and exerted through individuals such as project workers and JLOs.

While this latter point has found resonance in critiques of the supposedly exaggerated and overly pessimistic role of social professions in exerting social control on behalf of the state,

(Healy, 2000) this would be to misunderstand Foucault's notion of power. Power for Foucault is not necessarily repressive, but also positive and productive:

'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production' (Foucault 1991: 194).

This view of power then encourages us to look beyond the effects of the power of the law, but to look at how power (through discourse) is productive of effects and thus positive. Foucault's 'power' concept is easier to grasp when thinking of it in terms of *technologies of power* which can essentially be both repressive and liberatory. In this way, 'the view of power as both repressive and productive provides a useful way of explaining the complex operations of power between service providers and service users in cotemporary welfare states' (Healy, 2000: 45).

### **The critical stance of governmentality**

Finally, governmentality offers an essentially critical approach to social policy analysis, by 'transcending moral judgements about the proper form of 'good' and 'democratic' government' (Mc Kee, 2009:472). From this perspective, all technologies of governance are regulatory, even if they have liberatory intents (see e.g. Baistow, 1994; Cruikshank 1994, 1999; Healy 2004). As a consequence it becomes important to question the effects of all technologies of governance. Miller and Rose (2007:29) even consider this critical distance as one of the core features of governmentality in relation to social policy analysis and practice: 'Whilst the identification of failure is thus a central element in governmentality, an analysis of governmentality is not itself a tool for social programmers. To analyse what one might term 'the will to govern' is not to participate enthusiastically in it'. Miller and Rose's claim presented me with a challenge I faced throughout my research: how could my study of such a concrete intervention in which thousands of young people are involved on a yearly basis, contribute to eventually influence 'social programmers' or those who influence GYDP policy and practice, if one of the main assumptions of a governmentality approach to social policy analysis was its critical distance? While I could not address or solve this dilemma directly, it helped me to

clarify the purpose of this study . Moreover it also made me realise that I myself was part of the discursive community which places particular value on producing research which contributes to building up a 'measurable evidence-base' for policy and service changes in different areas of social policy.

Bacchi's (2009) discussion of the critical contribution of a governmentality framework to social policy analysis raises more pragmatic issues. First, she clarifies the overtly political agenda of a research framework which questions problematisations: It presumes that some problem representations benefit the members of some groups at the expense of others. According to her, it also takes the side of those who are harmed. The goal is to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects: '... we need a close analysis of how problems are represented to identify places where it may be possible to intervene in order to reduce deleterious effects' (Bacchi, 2009: 44- 45). Second, she extends the concept of governmentality further, to stretch beyond its applications to particular moments when reforms or other significant changes draw attention to a specific policy. Rather she suggests that '*every policy*, by its nature, constitutes a problematisation' (Bacchi, 2009:31). Finally, she also highlights how this critical approach to social policy analysis in the last instance also puts the researcher under critical scrutiny (Bacchi, 2009:39). Bacchi's observations usefully point to the critical contribution that a governmentality perspective can make at a 'deeper' level and which from this perspective are a necessary preliminary step to consider any concrete implications for policy change. For example, an interrogation of how young people, their offending behaviour and their position as citizens are constructed, could provide a basis from which to start thinking about the contents of concrete intervention programmes, such as those offered in the context of the GYDPs.

At the same time, it should be noted that the adoption of such 'pragmatic' approaches to the governmentality framework for critical social policy analysis, strictly speaking run counter to the post-structuralist epistemology of relativism and scepticism towards knowledge and truth claims. An ultimate resolution does not seem possible and partly also depends on where along the post-structuralist continuum a specific study is located.

## **Engaging with critiques and limitations**

I have shown in the previous sections of this chapter how post-structuralism in general and a governmentality approach in particular contribute to a critical analysis of social policy discourses and practices. I now want to discuss how responses to some of the fundamental critiques raised against each of these concerns, further validate the adopted analytical framework. Some of these can be responded to through a specification of their original meaning, while others can be approached more pragmatically as indeed undertaken by authors applying the governmentality framework to social policy analysis (Alvesson, 2002; Bacchi, 2009; Mc Donald and Marston, 2006; Stenson, 2005 and 2008).

In relation to post-structuralism generally, both critiques of radical individualism and anti-humanism as well as relativism in relation to knowledge and truth are important to consider notably in the context of an empirical analysis such as conducted in this thesis. Related to the first, the argument proposes that if social life is so fractured and diverse with an infinite number of subject positions it would make it impossible to talk of collective goals or social justice (Ferguson 2007; Taylor- Gooby 1994). Noble (2004) in her discussion of what 'post'-theories mean for social work, argues that they are '...quietly destabilizing and undermining social work's intellectual heritage that is based on enlightenment values' (Noble, 2004: 292). She argues that social work's contribution to achieving measurable improvement in people's lives by enabling the redistribution of resources, is threatened by an '... economic and cultural landscape, where uncertainties, doubt in humanist values and ethics, a re-emergence of relativism, the spread of global influences and the belief in the economic market are informing the new sociopublic discourse' (Noble, 2004:293). However, I would suggest that this conclusion misunderstands the contribution of post-structuralist analysis such as the one proposed in this thesis, as the approach has critical purchase in terms of its capacity to question for example assumptions related to the 'belief in the market' and through this opens up new ways of thinking about social policy and concrete interventions.

A second strand of critique is related to the role of knowledge in 'post'-theories. If grand narratives are no longer valid and knowledge can only be obtained in local and non-repeatable circumstances, how can knowledge serve as a source of emancipation? (Alvesson, 2002: 55). The implication of an extreme relativism could as a consequence lead to the futility of any social research: if true meaning and some sort of access to 'objective' reality cannot be gained

through for example studying policy texts or interviews, then what is the point of doing social research, particularly in the area of social policy? If everything is in the text, then what is the point to study texts as indicators of some extra-textual reality? In the context of this thesis, this post-structuralist approach to the role of knowledge for example influenced the analysis of GYDP project practice, as it did not allow me to differentiate between 'right' from 'wrong' practice. This was a challenge I had to continuously be aware of during my analysis and writing up of the thesis. I will discuss this point in more detail below when looking at the relationship of the discursive with material reality/ the non-discursive. However, at this point I suggest that this charge of relativism would be to 'misunderstand the conception of objects or the strength of the conception of discourse' (Alvesson, 2002:52). Rather the post-structuralist understanding of language means that it becomes important to pay attention to different representations of the world by 'carefully interrogating the potential effects of different languages and representations' (Bradbury and Reason, 2002: 6). Policy texts and interview accounts are therefore studied as reflections of specific discursive constructions in very specific, local and non-repeatable circumstances. In this context, it was also important to understand how my interpretation of policy and interview texts also offered only one such possible reading, without claiming to offer closure.

## **Thesis Structure**

Following this first introductory chapter, this thesis continues along the lines of the following chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines the concrete methodological tools applied throughout this research and critically discusses their usefulness in relation to answering the research questions posed in this thesis. In the first part of this chapter, the methodology of genealogical discourse analysis, drawing upon the work of Foucault, and its implications for the analysis of both policy and interview materials are discussed. Importantly, the Foucauldian (1977) notion of power-knowledge is also elaborated, as a key ingredient of the discourse analytical approach adopted. To further strengthen the analytical framework applied through the deployment of a genealogical discourse analysis, the first part of this chapter further demonstrates how it is complemented by deconstructive reading and rhetorical analysis of policy and interview materials. Here, it also addresses how some of the contradictions between these theoretical approaches can be accommodated and creatively combined in their deployment as a set of

‘tools’ assembled for this thesis. Finally, the first section of this chapter also elaborates the implications of the theoretical and methodological approach to the analysis of policy texts and interviews. It shows how the adoption of a post-structuralist approach to social policy analysis significantly influenced different elements of this thesis, starting with the phrasing of research questions to the particular approach adopted for textual and interview analysis. The second part of this chapter then describes the different steps undertaken throughout the research process. These include the construction and analysis of the policy archive, the selection of projects and interview participants, the compilation of the interview guides, the fieldwork process, and finally the analytic approach adopted in the analysis of policy and interview data.

Chapter 3 provides the contextual background to the development of the GYDPs from their early beginnings in 1991 to 2011<sup>17</sup>. It focuses on three distinct time periods which this research has identified in relation to the projects’ overall governance and contextualises them within wider Irish youth crime prevention policy. The second section of this chapter then focuses on the shifts and changes that occurred in relation to central parameters of the GYDPs, such as the projects’ official objectives, the target groups of young people, work practice and administration. In doing this, it shows in detail how GYDPs moved in a piecemeal manner from an informal and largely un-noticed intervention to the centre of official youth justice policy. This section also contextualises the current status of the projects as an intervention with its particular history and characteristics. Finally, the third section of this chapter contextualises the growth of the GYDPs as a partnership between voluntary youth work organisations and the Gardai, within the broader extension of the predominant state support provided to ‘targeted’ youth work provision. It further critically explores the role of youth work in youth crime prevention with reference to broader literature as to the involvement of youth work in state-led agendas as well as in the specific context of the GYDPs. This last section also serves to contextualise some of the interview findings relating to project workers’ and JLOs’ understandings and negotiations of the role of youth work in project practice.

Chapter 4 conceptualises the emergence, development and contemporary practices of GYDP policy and practice and the broader framework of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy. It does this, by considering the development of the ‘third model of youth justice’ (Pratt, 1989), based on corporatist principles. These include particularly the overarching role and importance accorded to adhering to policies and administrative decision making, the

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<sup>17</sup>December 2011 was the cut-off point for materials collected for this study, as this constituted the final phase of the writing up of this study.

‘responsibilisation’ of state and voluntary agencies and wider civil society in the task of crime prevention, the increasingly important role of dealing with (potential) young offenders in communities and finally the focus on behaviour modification as the main intervention with those considered ‘at risk’ of offending. In particular, this chapter also teases out to a greater detail the role of the risk-factor prevention paradigm which takes on an increasingly central importance in broader Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy more specifically. In line with the post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis, this chapter then moves beyond the corporatist model of youth justice by drawing upon a body of governmentality literature, which highlights how the different features of corporatist youth justice, can be understood as the expression of particular governmental rationalities and associated technologies of governing perceived social problems and young people in advanced liberal societies. This chapter also seeks to explain the almost inevitable pull from minimalist diversion towards more interventionist prevention approaches such as practiced in the GYDPs, by outlining how the rationale of prevention carries vested interests of different actors, and is built upon an inescapable logic of expansion and specialisation. Finally, this chapter also reviews relevant literature on youth crime prevention and diversion in the Irish context and highlights how the theoretical, methodological and empirical approach adopted in this thesis can offer additional layer to the analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy and the GYDPs so far not explored extensively in Irish literature.

Chapter 5 identifies the dominant discourses of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP policy and provides a critical analysis of these. Working closely with the materials presented in the policy and project archives, this chapter is concerned with identifying the ‘high politics’ (Freeman, 1999) or ‘rationalities’ (Miller and Rose, 2007) of Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP project policy and discourse. It explores how these are enabled through different discursive strategies (O’Sullivan, 2005) and how they are put into effect through different ‘technologies’ (Miller and Rose, 2007) or ‘formation of strategies’ (Foucault, 1972). Throughout, the chapter highlights how these dominant discourses have specific ‘discursive effects’, for example in relation to constructing the young offender and their families as ‘objects of knowledge’ (Foucault, 1972) to be acted upon in specific ways. The analysis also focuses on different ‘subject positions’ made available to young people and their families, but also to project workers in official policy and project discourse. Throughout, this chapter seeks to outline the ways in which contemporary youth crime prevention policy and project discourse act as ‘textual sites of power’ (Moss and Petrie, 2002:98). Through repetition



of dominant discourses which are based on identifiable assumptions, particular kinds of knowledge become established as 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1976) with demonstrable effects of power. Finally, this chapter also forms the foundation for subsequently exploring through the analysis of interview materials how dominant discourses 'travel' and related technologies exert influence over those drawing upon them.

Chapter 6 traces and identifies the discourses that project workers and JLOs draw upon in constructing their practice with young people. More specifically, it shows how project workers and JLOs engage with dominant discourses promoted at policy level, and how they mobilise, alter or re-contextualise these. It also identifies how they draw upon those discourses which are commonly evoked when core principles of youth work practice are elucidated (see chapter 4). Given the youth work heritage, the strong presence of the youth work sector and of project workers with a youth work background in the GYDPs, this chapter contributes to the debate regarding the implications of the involvement of youth work in an intervention such as the GYDPs (Banks, 2010; Davies and Merton 2009; Jeffs and Smith, 2002; Jeffs 2002; Kiely 2009; McMahon, 2009). In particular, it identifies whether one can speak of the emergence of 'youth justice work' as a distinctive professional practice in the Irish context. Here, the post-structuralist approach deployed in this thesis, reveals the possibility of the accommodation of multiple and partly contradictory discourses and practices, offering a nuanced interpretation as to the flexible and fluid boundaries between different practices of working with young people. Finally, by deconstructing some of the terminology often drawn upon in relation to working with young people in the GYDPs, this chapter seeks to offer a critical reflection of what sometimes is presented unquestioningly as 'progressive' practice in working with young people.

Chapter 7 closely analyses how project workers and JLOs engage with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The chapter suggests, that the variety of changes introduced as part of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), with the aim to steer project workers and JLOs, create a new corporate 'identity' for the GYDPs. These changes have particular regulatory effects, which work at different levels and with different degrees of impact. In order to trace and identify these differential impacts, this chapter analyses how project workers and JLOs engage with the different discourses as well as the tools introduced as part of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Ultimately, the chapter suggests that while formal autonomy remains with local projects (e.g. in terms of devising work plans and activities) the degree to which this is the

case depends very much on the individual project workers and their level of critical engagement with the *Agenda of Chang* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Here, a body of literature which conceptualises identity regulation as a form of organisational control (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and thus makes room for analysing different discursive strategies of resistance (Ashcraft, 2005; Collinson, 2000; Mumby, 2005; Prasad and Prasad, 2000; Thomas and Davies, 2005), is drawn upon to analyse the differentiated ways in which project workers and JLOs have responded to the discursive strategies and technologies deployed by the IYJS in implementing the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61).

Chapter 8 explores how dominant discourses on young people and their offending behaviour, identified in official youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy analysis are reflected in project workers' and JLOs' narratives. More specifically, this chapter demonstrates through close analysis of interview data how 'confident characterisations'<sup>18</sup> (Lesko, 1996) about adolescence and its foundations in biology and psychology converge with the efforts of contemporary GYDP policy to mobilise behavioural change, or 'ethical reconstruction'<sup>19</sup> (Rose, 2000) as a core element of intervention. The analysis also suggests that narratives of young people and their offending behaviour used by project workers and JLOs are related to 'origin stories' (Griffin, 1993) of 'juvenile delinquency', which ultimately objectify young people as victims of a variety of factors influencing their offending behaviour (both internal and external to them). It will be suggested that these narratives mirror discourses which are commonly found to characterise the currently predominant thinking about young people in terms of risk (see e.g. France, 2000) and are foundational elements of a 'new governance of youth crime' (Gray, 2009: 443). This chapter then continues to show how the discourse of social and cultural deficiencies drawn upon by project workers and JLOs extends to young people's families and contributes to creating an image of young people's families and localities as bleak and hopeless places, opening up the 'family' as new site of intervention in the context of the GYDPs. It also draws upon a body of literature which argues that these particular

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<sup>18</sup> Lesko (1996) describes 'confident characterisations' of young people as assumptions and unquestioned definitions about young people which are discursively deployed to achieve various effects, e.g. to explain their offending behaviour. She shows how 'confident characterisations' are based on longstanding assumptions dating back to the 'discovery' of 'adolescence' and 'juvenile delinquency' at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Western contexts, and how they have over time, despite reconfigurations and mutations, remained relatively 'stable' and 'confident'.

<sup>19</sup> Rose's (2000) term of 'ethical reconstruction' forms an element of what he describes as the new politics of control in advanced liberal societies. The focus of social control is placed on changing individuals' subjectivity through psychological interventions along advanced liberal rationalities such as individual responsibility.

constellations of problematisations in relation to families and parenting in general but also in youth justice settings more specifically (Gerwitz, 2010; Holt 2010) are not neutral but draw upon particularly middle-class discourses as ideals (see also Ilan, 2007). Finally, this chapter seeks to identify alternative explanations of youthful offending offered by project workers and JLOs. Here, the analysis will show how project workers and JLOs position young people in relation to societal constraints. The final concluding chapter summarises the key research questions of this thesis and shows how they have been answered in the different chapters of this thesis. Finally, the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions of this thesis are outlined.

## **Conclusion**

Despite forming a central element of Irish youth justice policy and despite the significant numbers of young people involved on a yearly basis, GYDPs have due to their informality and piecemeal development, remained largely invisible from critical analysis. This chapter has shown how the application of a post-structuralist lens more generally and a governmentality framework more specifically, can address this gap and moreover how these analytical frameworks provide an alternative to analysing Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy and practice. By shifting the emphasis from a 'what-works' framework to analysing, questioning and deconstructing the discursive make-up of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP policy, this thesis looks at the ways in which young people, their offending behaviour and interventions aimed at reducing this behaviour are constructed in official discourse as well as by project workers and JLOs. This has the potential to lay the foundation for re-conceptualising accepted ways of thinking about young people, their offending behaviour and ways of acting upon them. This chapter has also demonstrated how core-concepts of post-structuralist social theory relating to historical scepticism, the role of knowledge and truth claims, the centrality of language and discourse, and the conceptualisation of identity and resistance have informed the design and conduct of this thesis. Complementary to this, I have also highlighted how the application of the notion of governmentality, including its insights into political rationalities and technologies of government, governing beyond the state, and the conceptualisation of power and its critical stance, created an analytical framework through which this thesis has been approached. Throughout this chapter, I have also sought to address some of the critiques raised against the governmentality framework, such as the anti-empirical stance of only textual policy analysis

rather than 'real' practices of governing; the lack of attention paid to individual agency and thus resistance and the negation of the importance of the state in formulating social policy. The review of these critiques has also helped me to further refine the focus of this study, particularly also with regards to the claims made and limits imposed through these critiques on the possible outcomes of this study. Above all, they helped me to understand that I am as much as everyone embedded within the 'discursive community', which places value on the production of 'measurable evidence' in social policy research. This drew my attention to the importance of distancing myself from these claims and to reiterate the specific niche which my work seeks to fill. For example, if we do not trace and identify on which basis constructions of young people and their offending behaviour are built and which knowledge forms are privileged over others, than any significant reforms of social policy or re-thinking of interventions with young people, will only stay at a superficial level. In this way, the critical interrogation of the assumptions on which contemporary youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy and practice are based, is a fundamental step towards any possible reform.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Framework of analysis, research methods and conducting the research**

#### **Introduction**

Building upon the theoretical framework of post-structuralism elaborated in the first chapter of this thesis, this chapter outlines the concrete methodological tools applied throughout this research and critically discusses their usefulness in relation to answering the research questions posed in this thesis. In the first part of this chapter, the methodology of genealogical discourse analysis, drawing upon the work of Foucault, and its implications for the analysis of both policy and interview materials are discussed. Here, the focus is placed particularly on the four 'rules of formation' which Foucault (1972) described as constitutive of discourse and the chapter highlights the implications of each one of these in the context of the analysis undertaken in this thesis. Importantly, the Foucauldian notion of power-knowledge is also elaborated, as a key ingredient of the discourse analytical approach adopted. To further strengthen the analytical framework applied through the deployment of a genealogical discourse analysis, the first part of this chapter further demonstrates how it is complemented by deconstructive reading and rhetorical analysis of policy and interview materials. Finally, this first section of the chapter also elaborates the implications of the adopted theoretical and methodological approach to the analysis of policy texts and interviews. This is important, as a post-structuralist approach more generally and genealogical discourse analysis more specifically demand a re-thinking of more traditional approaches to social policy analysis as well as more interpretative approaches to interview analysis. The second part of this chapter describes the different steps undertaken throughout the research process. These include the construction and analysis of the policy archive, the selection of projects and interview participants, the compilation of the interview guides, the fieldwork process, and finally the modef analysis deployed in the interpretation of policy and interview materials.

#### **From Archaeology to Genealogy to Discourse Analysis**

An increasing body of scholarship in the social policy field has drawn upon the principles of genealogy and discourse analysis based on the work of Foucault (see Bacchi 2009; Mc Donald and Marston 2006; Moss and Petrie, 2002). Nevertheless, a challenge encountered in designing this research was that this literature contained very little explicit guidance in terms

of how to come up with research framework that effectively applies post-structuralist tools to contemporary social policy settings focusing on both policy and interview data. Perhaps the difficulty in locating concise descriptions as to how to go about doing 'Foucauldian' discourse analysis is shaped by the continuing debate as to whether his conceptual tools are methods as such<sup>1</sup> (see Diaz-Bone et al., 2007) and due to the 'very real danger in one's work being dismissed as *unFoucauldian- if one doesn't get it right*' (Graham, 2005:2). Because of the absence of a prescribed framework for discourse analysis based on Foucault, it became apparent early on in my research that an effective knowledge of Foucault's development of the concepts of archaeology, genealogy and discourse was important to devise my own approach to applying his ideas in this study. For additional support, I drew on different elements of the work of scholars who applied Foucault's ideas when conducting research in different settings. Bacchi's (2009) '*What's the problem represented to be*' approach to social policy analysis developed on the basis of Foucauldian notions of governmentality and discourse, was useful in terms of constructing my research questions. Kendall and Wickham's (2002) explication of Foucauldian methods was helpful for incorporating the epistemological change required in applying his methods.<sup>2</sup> Link's (1986) graphical representation of the concept of 'interdiscourse' was helpful in mapping and grasping the area of 'youth crime prevention' as a discursive formation.<sup>3</sup> Jaeger's (1999) and Jaeger and Maier's (2009) considerations regarding data collection, saturation and issues regarding validity, as well as Graham's (2005) description of her quest to deploy a Foucauldian framework to issues around contemporary schooling were also helpful.

It was in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) that Foucault provided a thorough conceptualisation of discourse and discursive practice. In this piece of work, he sought to disentangle the laws, regularities and rules of formation of systems of thought that emerged in the 19th century, particularly in the human sciences. In undertaking his archaeological analysis,

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<sup>1</sup> In his essay, 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault stated that his historical work combined archaeology as a 'method' and genealogy as a 'design' (Foucault, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Their work exemplified amongst other things how a genealogical framework of analysis does not seek to look for causalities in explaining phenomena, but for contingencies. This has repercussions for several steps in the research process, from framing questions to analysing policy texts etc. Thus, the focus shifts from questions such as 'why is contemporary youth crime prevention policy focusing on a risk-factor prevention paradigm' towards 'on what knowledge areas and technologies of governance is contemporary youth crime prevention policy based' (i.e. what are its contingencies)? The shift of analysis thus focuses on analysing problematisations and problem representations, rather than on reasons or causal explanations.

<sup>3</sup> Link (1986) demonstrated how the 'interdiscourse' of 'art history' was constituted through everyday discourses, specialised discourses and other interdiscursive discourses.

he sought to describe the 'epistemological mutation of history' (Foucault, 1972:12) while at the same time exemplifying how an archaeological analysis- the analysis of discourse being part of it- was undertaken. Foucault's method of 'archaeology' sought to offer an alternative analytical tool to those used in 'conventional' historical analysis. The term 'archaeology' was chosen intentionally as a juxtaposition to the traditional understanding of history 'as a discipline devoted to silent monuments...' (Foucault, 1972: 8). Rather, historical/archaeological analysis aspired 'to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument' (Foucault, 1972:8), whereas these monuments refer to documents which are 'questioned' (Foucault, 1972:7) through archaeological analysis. Foucault observed however, that this 'questioning' did not take place through interpretation as in traditional historical analysis, or with the view:

'to decide whether it is telling the truth or what is its expressive value, but to work on it from within and develop it: history now organises the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations' (Foucault, 1972: 7).

As a consequence, the document is no longer conceptualised as a text which is studied to deduct meaning from it or to find out what the document is trying to imply, but to describe the documentary material as the end itself. The document represents a self-contained order for Foucault. As a consequence, archaeological analysis of the history of ideas now becomes interested in 'establishing thresholds, ruptures and transformations' (Foucault 1972:204), rather than to look for continuities and grand narratives.

It was out of this conceptualisation of archaeology, that Foucault subsequently developed his genealogical method. The term genealogy borrowed, from Nietzsche (Foucault, 1971), was developed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) where he was concerned with uncovering the discursive and non-discursive (i.e. institutional) practices and the complex relations between power, knowledge, and the body. In addition to tracing the 'history of the present', by analysing how phenomena were derived and constituted historically - with a particular emphasis on historical ruptures and changes - genealogy became also concerned with power and knowledge. While debates remain as to the discontinuities and as to why Foucault shifted his analysis from archaeology to genealogy (Kendall and Wickham, 1999;

Smart, 2002) and to what extent there are breaks or continuities between these two concepts, I suggest it more useful to think of genealogy as an added lens which allows for an interrogation of the categories of truth claims or positivities identified through archaeological analysis. The categories of knowledge identified through archaeological analysis are through genealogical analysis 'almost totally subverted by the emergence of a new set of conceptions' (Smart, 2002:43). Genealogy also shifts the focus from the analysis of problem representations with a view to tracing their emergence and shifts in terms of the 'diachronic' aspects, i.e. over time, while archaeology focuses more on discourses at specific 'synchronic' moments in time. Furthermore, Foucault's more explicit attention paid to knowledge and power in work following the *Archaeology of Knowledge* could be considered as a further development of archaeological research (Dean, 1994:32-34).

Bacchi (2009:43) provided a useful distinction between archaeology and genealogy, by linking the two conceptual tools to the research questions posed in her '*What's the problem represented to be*' approach. She argued that the task of an archaeological analysis was in a way a preliminary step which described the archive of problematisations and establishes the 'positivity' of a 'truth' or 'knowledge regime'. This approach was according to her, achieved through answering the question: 'what representations and presuppositions underlie the specific problem representation'? Genealogy then seeks to trace how and through which 'wider systems of practices' such problematisations emerge: 'Genealogy therefore has a *destabilizing effect* on problem representations that are often taken for granted' (Bacchi, 2009:11). The emphasis here is placed on the identification of contingencies of problem representations, rather than on causalities of problems.

In the context of this thesis, the concept of 'archaeology' demanded, that I first traced the 'positivity'<sup>4</sup> of youth crime prevention policy through identifying which bodies of knowledge were constitutive of the 'youth crime prevention' discourse. In the next step, the genealogical lens then traced how these dominant discourses have come about and how they have changed over time. The ensuing analysis for example shows how the operation of the GYDPs has since their inception accumulated several rationales upon which it bases its practice. These shifts sometimes create tensions between those youth workers and other social professionals

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to Foucault's term 'positivity of knowledge' (Foucault, 1972:14). According to Foucault, genealogical discourse analysis contributes amongst other things to establish 'positivity of knowledge', by teasing out the sometimes maybe implicit and not always immediately obvious 'truths' or assumptions of discourses.



involved in the projects which are 'narrowly' focused on crime prevention and those which look at broader issues affecting young people's lives. The genealogical analysis also demonstrates the continuities of certain discourses in wider youth crime prevention policy. These can be seen for example in relation to the link between poverty and committing an offence and the perceived role of families in causing young people's offending behaviour.

### **Discourse and Foucault**

It is useful to trace the development of the notion of 'discourse' in Foucault's own work to understand its particular characteristics. In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault describes his journey to develop the notion of 'discourse':

'We can now understand the reason for the equivocal meaning of the term discourse, which I have used and abused in many different senses: in the most general, and vaguest way, it denoted a group of verbal performances; and by discourse, then, I meant that which was produced (perhaps all that was produced) by the group of signs. But I also meant a group of acts of formulation, a series of sentences or propositions. Lastly- and it is the meaning that was finally used (together with the first, which served in a provisional capacity)- discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence' (Foucault, 1972: 121).

The role of 'statements' (énonciations) is central in Foucault's conceptualisation of 'discourse'. In *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) Foucault had shown by deconstructing fields of knowledges (e.g. psychopathology) how statements were much too diverse and fractious to describe them as unitary. Rather, he found rifts, interruptions and ruptures, which described these groups of statements. However, these statements were not presented in a disorganized and unsystematic way, but through his description of these discontinuities and dispersions, he found that a system of dispersion was at hand. When this was the case, Foucault argued one could speak of a discursive formation:

'And if I succeed in showing that this discursive formation really is the principle of dispersion and redistribution, not of formulations, not of sentences, not of propositions, but of statements (in the sense in which I have used this word), the term

discourse can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation; thus I shall be able to speak of the clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse' (Foucault, 1972: 121).

Following Foucault, a discourse or a 'discursive formation', is manifested through statements that are based on certain 'rules of formation' and which through their systematic appearance become recognisable as discourse. Discursive analysis then focuses on the identification and analysis of statements as 'bearers of their *rules of formation*, i.e. the rules that made the statements possible and that simultaneously already reside in them (system of preceding statements)' (Diaz Bone et al., 2007:6).

The emphasis of a discourse analysis following Foucault lies on answering four strategic questions in relation to the four rules of formation which he identified. Within this thesis, these rules of formation in combination with an analytical emphasis of power/knowledge and the discursive effects of discourses were central to the ensuing analysis and are now outlined in more specific detail.

### **The formation of objects – discursive effects**

The first rule of formation discussed by Foucault refers to the formation of objects through discourse. Foucault (1972) insists that discourses are not 'a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, coloured chain of words' (Foucault, 1972: 48). But rather they are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49). 'Objects' in this interpretation refers to 'objects of knowledge, the entities which particular disciplines or sciences recognize within their fields of interest, and which they take as targets for investigation' (Fairclough, 1992:41). In analysing the formation of objects, the discursive analytic investigates how specific discourses construct and create problems so as to make them governable. This aspect of genealogical discourse analysis allows for a critical interrogation of all human and social practices, as they by definition construct objects.

For example in the context of this thesis, this first rule of formation shows how the 'risk' discourse creates the young person at the crossroads of multiple problem representations. The (potentially) offending young person becomes an 'object of discourse' (Foucault, 1972) which

can now be described and spoken about. Graham (2005) shows in detail how Foucault's insights regarding 'object-constituting' effects of discourse reinforce and create 'social reality'. The repetition of risk factors in statements across different texts leads to a constitution of a discursive field which is as a consequence thought of as 'the truth'. In this way, the young (potential) offender is located and placed and now belongs in this specific discursive field of risk factors and most importantly 'the discourse that constitutes the object also constitutes the knowledges and practices through which that object is disciplined' (Graham, 2005:10). Bacchi (2009:16) summarised these as discursive effects and points out that 'identified problem representations and the discourses which frame them make it difficult to think differently'. On the broadest level, discursive practices 'produce a perception and representation of social reality' (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007: 7). Knowledge categories and descriptions of objects of knowledge and related subject positions produce particular ways of how the world is represented and as a consequence how particular views become dominant over others. In the context of this thesis for example, discursive practices in relation to locating the reasons for young people's offending in the realm of the individual, their families and communities, favour solutions based on the adaptation of the individual young person. Alternatives, such as looking at pathways of offending in their particular socio-cultural contexts, tend to be sidelined. The analysis of the formation of objects makes these effects visible.

### **The formation of enunciative modalities – subjectifying effects**

The second rule of formation focuses on the formation of 'enunciative modalities', which are 'types of discursive activity such as describing, forming hypotheses, formulating regulations, teaching, and so forth, each of which has its own associated subject positions' (Fairclough, 1992: 42). As discussed earlier (see Chapter 1), the shift from the individual to the subject in post-structuralism generally and more specifically in Foucault, means that 'attention must be drawn to the ways in which power relations differentially position subjects in discourse, even when (perhaps especially when) this produces 'contradictory subjectivity'' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:54). Here, the type of discourse analysis following Foucault, focuses on which subject positions are made available to individuals in discourse and how these different subject positions possibly relate to each other. In terms of this research, this observation is important, as the ensuing analysis shows how for example the availability of the subject position 'youth justice worker' is drawn upon selectively in certain instances, as it is seen in contrast to the subject position 'youth worker'. In addition, shaping these critical observations

deployed in this research, Bacchi (2009:16) suggests that attention in relation to subjectification effects, should in policy analysis also be directed towards what Foucault has termed 'dividing practices' (Foucault, 1982: 208). This understanding asks that attention is paid to how certain groups of characteristics, people or behaviour are idealised, compared with (even if only implicitly) and favoured over others, sending powerful messages as to what or who is considered worthy of support.

### **The formation of concepts**

The third rule of formation refers to the formation of 'concepts' which essentially deals with the interrelationships between different parts of the text (intratextual relations) or between concepts of different texts or discourses (interdiscursive relationships). In the context of this thesis, these insights are relevant in two particular ways. First, this allowed me to analyse how official youth crime prevention discourse hooked into various specialist and non-specialist discourses and how project workers and JLOs similarly drew upon a variety of discourses to constitute their discursive practice. Second, it allowed for a consideration of discursive contexts in the analysis as interpreted by Foucault: 'one must take a step back to the discursive formation and the articulate of discursive formations in orders of discourse to explicate the context-text-meaning relationship' (Fairclough, 1992: 48).

In *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault denotes as 'interdiscursive' the 'relations between discursive formations' and the concept has as a consequence been deployed in Foucauldian discourse scholarship to analyse how different discursive formations make up a particular types 'interdiscourse'. Broadly speaking, 'interdiscursive' relations define the relationship between different discursive formations or different texts (Fairclough, 1992: 46). Link (1986) usefully illustrates how this can serve as a conceptual analytic for the analysis of youth crime prevention policy. In his scheme 'art history' is described as an interdiscourse which is made up through everyday discourses, such as popular philosophy and media knowledge, through specialist discourses, located in both the sciences, such as physiology, and the human sciences, such as legal discourse and finally, through interdiscursively dominated specialised discourses, such as philosophy and theology. Each of these discourses exert different types of power: technological power follows from specialist scientific discourses; normalisation power from specialist discourses in the human sciences; and ethical power from inter-discursively constituted specialist discourses.

This conceptualisation of youth crime prevention as interdiscourse is then useful to grasp the field of youth crime prevention. The interdiscourse of youth crime prevention is made up through ‘everyday discourse’, such as the public perception of and worry over youth crime; of specialist discourses located in the sciences, such as cognitive psychology; discourses located in the human sciences, such as the law; and finally interdiscursively dominated specialist discourses, such as youth work, social work or criminology. Some discursive strands or themes identified in the analysis of policy and interview texts, also span across these different elements of interdiscourse. For example, in this thesis, the discourse strand of ‘economic rationality’ runs through several of the specialist and non-specialist discourses constitutive of youth crime prevention discourse, and serves as an indication of its pervasiveness.

### **Formation of strategies**

The fourth and final rule of formation then refers to the ‘formation of strategies’. This refers to the ‘materiality of statements’ (Fairclough, 1992: 49) or what has been elaborated as ‘technologies’ of governing by Miller and Rose (1990) or as ‘strategies of governing’ by Dean (1999, 2009). Here the emphasis shifts to non-discursive practices which materialise discursive formations. In the context of this thesis ‘technologies’ of governing for example include training and networking programmes analysed in the context of the *Agenda of Change*<sup>5</sup> (IYJS, 2009b:61) or the wide variety of classifying exercises (the risk factor assessment; the alcohol and public order offending profiles; the classification of different family types) prescribed by the Irish Youth Justice Service which materialise various discourses. Based on Dean (2006) and referring to the material impacts of problem representations, Bacchi (2009) also introduced the term ‘lived effects’, as a category of discursive effects to be analysed in researching the impacts of social policy. To a lesser extent, these ‘lived effects’ can also be traced in this thesis. For example, the effects of new regulations introduced in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) have implications for the very existence of projects which seek to maintain their previously held autonomy, possibly with implications for young people involved in projects.

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<sup>5</sup> As a reminder, the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) refers to the change process initiated by the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2009. It includes several elements of project reform, which as is argued throughout this thesis, fundamentally alter some of its principal tenets.

## Power/Knowledge

A central element of discourse analysis following Foucault is the 'power/knowledge' factor, or what Kendall and Wickham (1999:30) call the 'additional ingredient' of genealogical discourse analysis. The Foucauldian conceptualisation of power as circular, ubiquitous, productive and constitutive has been discussed earlier and is relevant in the specific context of power/knowledge as well (see Chapter 1). Here however, the focus is more specifically on the particular role of power in relation to knowledge and discourse. The concept of 'power' serves as the intermediary between discourse and knowledge. Power relations create the connections between the field of knowledge and discursive relations: 'power relations serve to make the connections, between the visible and the sayable, yet they exist outside these poles' (Kendall and Wickam, 1999:48). Power can be seen as a strategy which makes the reciprocal connection between the sayable - that is 'discourse' and the visible, that is what is manifested in material practice and institutions. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault for example showed how the prison - the form of visibility- produced statements which reintroduced criminality and additionally, how statements around criminality produced forms of visibility that reinforced the prison. The forms of visibility then in the specific context of *Discipline and Punish* (1977) are technologies of disciplinary power exercised at the micro-level through material techniques such as observation, registration and reporting. These technologies of power, according to Foucault, have emerged in conjunction with the emergence of new forms of knowledge, particularly as advanced in the human sciences. Smart (2002) summarises this knowledge/power connection effectively: 'Knowledge is inextricably entwined with relations of power and advances in knowledge are associated with advances and developments in the exercise of power. Thus for Foucault, there is no disinterested knowledge; knowledge and power are mutually and inextricably interdependent' (Smart 2002: 64).

The Foucauldian conceptualisation of power-knowledge, then has particular implications for the discursive analysis conducted in this thesis. First, no type of knowledge can be called 'neutral' or 'value-free' and therefore has to be questioned through disentangling the power/knowledge axis manifested in discourse. Thus, for example, the 'risk-factor' paradigm as applied in the GYDPs to assess young people, is interrogated with regards to its assumptions and presuppositions, despite its claim to be a 'scientifically' designed and objective tool. But also practices which claim to be 'empowering' or 'emancipatory' are questioned in relation to their regulatory effects. Similarly, acts of resistance by project workers are interpreted neither

as positive or negative, but as a constitutive element of power (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:51). Second, Bacchi (2009) highlights how this emphasis on power/knowledge following Foucault also questions who is privileged to produce 'knowledges' that count as 'truth'. In the context of this thesis, this focus on who produces dominant discourses (or better: who is excluded therefrom) is useful when for example thinking about young people's level of input in the risk factor assessment process or the GYDPs more specifically, or when looking at how strongly the 'youth work' voice emerges in youth crime prevention discourse. Third, Hunt and Wickham (1994) emphasise that discourse analysis seeks to interrogate which knowledges are 'made available' by those authorising particular knowledges: certain types of knowledges are made available, while others are not. Tracing and making explicit which particular types of knowledge are repeatedly drawn upon in official discourse is useful in the context of this thesis when for example looking at the explanatory factors of offending behaviour as well as associated programmes preferred over others in the context of the GYDPs official policy and practice guidelines.

### **Deconstructing discourses**

In providing a critique of key texts, this thesis also draws generally upon the notion of 'deconstruction', an approach most often associated with Jacques Derrida (1978, 1991). Deploying an applied analytical tool drawn on Derrida's understanding of deconstruction seemed counterintuitive given that he argued that deconstruction 'is not a method and cannot be transformed into one' (Derrida, 1991:273). Derrida famously stated that 'there is nothing but text', thus implying similarly to Foucault, that there is no final interpretation of a text possible. Derrida (1978:292) traced this idea of absolute pluralism back to '...the Nietzschean affirmation, that is the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered an active interpretation'. However, in spite of Derrida's scepticism toward methodology, commentators have argued that deconstruction does have significant critical potential, in its capacity, as argued by Peters and Biesta (2009:47) '... to bring into view the impossibility to totalise, the impossibility to articulate a self-sufficient, self-present centre from which everything can be mastered and controlled...what gives deconstruction its motive and drive is precisely its concern for – or, to be more precise, it's the wish to do justice - to what is excluded' (Peters and Biesta, 2009: 47). It is this capacity to make visible the binary opposition, 'the other', or the excluded form of presence, which enhances the critical capacity

of deconstruction. Deconstruction from this perspective is a means to unveil the power relationships at work in policy documents and related texts (Peters and Biesta, 2009; Rosenau, 1992; Shapiro, 2006). Derrida has noted:

‘...when you deconstruct anything, you do not destroy, or dissolve, or cancel the legitimacy of what you are deconstructing. In that case, deconstructing the subject- if there is such a thing- means first to analyse historically, in a genealogical way, the different layers which have built, so to speak. Every concept has its own history, and the concept of subject has a very, very long, heavy and complex history’ (Derrida and Montefiore, 2001).

In more practical terms, Derrida suggests that deconstruction means ‘employing a text’s own stratagems against it, producing a force of dislocation that spreads itself throughout the entire system, fissuring it in every direction and thoroughly delimiting it’ (Derrida 1978:20). In this thesis, this observation permits a focus in the textual analysis not only on what is in the text, but what is left out, what remains unnamed and what remains concealed. This disposition towards the text also encourages an approach where by seeking to question the positive terms that appear in particular texts to designate a particular object/subject, a deconstructionist reading can also make explicit, what is considered as desirable/undesirable, as well as what is maybe left unspoken. For example, in many instances of the analysis of contemporary youth crime prevention policy, an absence of a discussion of police behaviour towards young people is notable. Similarly, descriptions of young people in relation to their offending behaviour lack any reference to their potential and their strengths. In this manner, deconstruction is an illuminating perspective, rather than a destructive one, as is sometimes misrepresented.

The usefulness of deconstructive reading in the context of this thesis is also particularly evident in instances where young people and their families are described through a catalogue of ‘risks’, revealing for example how the ‘ideal’ young person or the ‘ideal’ family is presented in a classed way, but also as active ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ (Kelly, 2006). Additionally, in applying this method and giving value to the suppressed term, ‘the dependency of the positive term on the negative is shown and a third term is recovered, which shows a way of world making that is not dependent on the opposition of the first two’ (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 106). This understanding becomes important in the thesis when for example young people’s offending is attributed to a lack of parental control by interview participants as if to suggest



parenting practices generally in society had not become less authoritarian in particular ways over time. This excludes possible alternative ideas such as egalitarian relationships between parents and young people. Within this general framework, I further consider what Alvesson (2002) calls 'unpacking' of dominant categories, as a useful deconstructive tool of reading of texts. Categories such as for example 'young person at risk' are designated to order reality and to systematise interventions. Unpacking these categories questions the assumptions and challenges associated with them. It allows the posing of questions such as: what precisely does 'risk' mean and how has this particular understanding come about? Who is given the authority to define and measure risk?

Finally, a deconstructive reading and analysis of texts also looks at rhetorical operations behind arguments and the way they are delivered. With rhetoric being the act of persuasion and rhetorical analysis being the analysis of acts of persuasion- policy documents obviously lend themselves to rhetorical analysis. And although rhetorical analysis is anchored more strongly in the linguistic turn than poststructuralist discourse analysis, a clear parallel can be drawn between the two modes of analysis: 'the goal of rhetoric is never to be 'scientific' or to be able to categorize persuasion for all times and all places. The power of rhetorical analysis is its immediacy, its ability to talk about the particular and the possible, not the universal and the probable' (Leach, 2000:211). This is similar to Foucauldian discourse analysis which doesn't seek to establish or seek universal truths, but only to lay bare contingencies identified at particular moments in particular constellations. The discursive analysis of official youth crime prevention and GYDP discourse presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis shows how several rhetorical means are deployed in policy texts to reinforce dominant discourses.

The approach therefore to deconstruction I have adopted in my analysis can best be described as pragmatic. There are certainly significant philosophical divergences between Foucault and Derrida – issues which remain beyond the remit of this research. However when it comes to the analysis of the text, both shared the idea that text can suppress meaning and that their actual relationships have to be revealed through deconstruction or excavation. Whilst, as noted by Said (1978: 674), 'Derrida's criticism moves us *into* the text, Foucault's *in and out of* it', both shared a keen fascination with their imbrication with power and a continuing interest in the intimate and sometimes devastating ways in which they shaped social outcomes. In devising a post-structuralist analysis, it is possible to draw upon both bodies of social theory in meaningful and effective ways, without papering over their contradictions. As noted by Said (1978: 676):

‘For both writers, their work is meant to replace the tyranny and the fiction of direct reference – to what Derrida calls presence, or the transcendental signified – with the rigor and practice of textuality mastered on its own highly eccentric ground in Derrida’s case, and in Foucault’s, it’s in its highly protracted, enduring, systematised, and sustained persistence. Dedefinition and antireferentiality are Derrida and Foucault’s common response to the positivist ethos which they both abhor’.

### **Policy texts as stories of the present<sup>6</sup>**

The following two sections discuss the implications of post-structuralism and the associated methodological tools for the analysis of policy texts and interview materials. The interpretation of policy documents as ‘textual sites of power’ (Moss and Petrie, 2002:98) positions them as documents which offer particular narratives of ‘problematizations’ and establish ‘truth regimes’ of how problem categories are to be understood. Policy texts are thus imbued with power/knowledge by drawing upon and promoting dominant discourses, a process that shapes their logic of problematisation and intervention. Policy texts also seek to promote the dominant discourses through rhetorically convincing their audience of their very domination. For example, the discursive analysis of the textual policy archive, presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis, shows how policy texts seek to convince their audience of their ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’ by selectively presenting research evidence supportive of the stance adopted but which neglects important alternatives.

As outlined above, poststructuralist ontology understands the relation between ‘text’ and the material world as a result of context-specific ‘social constructions’ which are in turn dependent on discourses, imbued with power-knowledge. From this perspective, language in all forms, oral or written, produces ‘artefacts resembling discursively produced knowledge that are held true within specific communities of thought and practice’ (Berglund, 2008:23). Policy texts can then be imagined as narratives and stories of specific contexts, places and times. These ‘histories of the present’, are however not the result of some great political project, but rather evidence of ‘contingent lash-ups of thought and action’ (Rose, 1999:27). Identifying these different layers of thought and action by using a genealogical discourse analysis and a deconstructive reading is what I consider the task of post-structural analysis. By ‘peeling off’

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<sup>6</sup> This leans on Foucault’s terminology ‘history of the present’ and is for example used by Berglund (2008) in his analysis of Lifelong Learning Discourses as ‘stories of the present’.

the different layers of text, the analysis does not seek to discover true meaning of the text or the 'objective truth' of social reality, but the partial and context specific knowledge applied in specific circumstances. These knowledge regimes found in specific discourses, often presented as self-evident in policy documents, determine not only how and what someone can be, but also what is allowed to be spoken and thought in concrete interventions. As a consequence, the ways in which policy documents describe young people can have fundamental impacts on how young people can 'be' in specific interventions. These discourse can also have fundamental impacts on how different professional groups think about and act with young people. These aspects are demonstrated in this thesis.

Moss and Petrie (2002) show how the connection between discourses and the provision of services can be uncovered through post-structuralist analysis. In their analysis of British education policy, they suggested that three dominant images of the child (the child as incomplete adult, the innocent, even 'primitive' child and the child as the redemptive vehicle) dominate the policy narrative. These images are, they argue, operationalised with a 'mixture of forces': modernity, advanced liberalism and the business values of a neo-liberal market economy. This results in children's services which are atomised, leave little autonomy to the practitioner and do not provide spaces where children can develop their own culture, but where they can be processed in an instrumental way. Provisions of children's services are made with predetermined and specified purposes and expected outcomes in mind and are thus focused on problematisations of childhood, such as preventing future problems of delinquency, drug abuse, unemployment, rather than dealing with children's experiences in the here and now and from more positive perspectives.

### **Post-structuralism and interviews**

Post-structuralism also has particular implications for the positioning of the empirical research interview. Through post-structuralist discourse analysis, the possibility emerges for empirical researchers to focus on the constitution of social practices and on processes of subjectification. These practices and processes of subjectification are investigated with a focus on constituting processes: how do policy texts effect project workers and JLOs' understandings of their own professional roles and the young people they work with? How do project workers and JLOs speak the young person and their families into existence? How do project workers take up discursive practices as their own and how do they negotiate/resist them?

Alvesson (2002) distinguishes between two approaches to understanding interviews: the neo-positivist view on the one hand, which understands interviews as a value-free instrument that gathers data as objectively as possible about social reality; and the romantic view on the other hand, which emphasises that insight into the interviewee's experience and views can be gained by establishing a trusted relationship, rapport etc. Language and conversation focused analyses break with the assumptions of both neopositivists and romantics: Interview talk does from this position *not* offer valid knowledge of other settings; it just informs as to how people behave in the very specific interview situations: what stories they tell, etc. A purely post-structuralist view takes this interpretation of interviews a step further, by rejecting notions that they provide clues to the 'interiors' of the interviewees (e.g. how a youth worker 'really thinks' about young people) or access to 'exterior' social practice (e.g. daily practice in the GYDPs). The post-structuralist approach to analysing discourses produced in interview accounts, then posits that the produced discourses in interview accounts are finding their expression through the particular individual. In terms of interviewing, this understanding positions interview texts as an outcome of the discourses that are present and available for individuals to draw upon, thereby constituting the subject and talk. The accounts produced are mainly of interest as indications of the discourses at play and the powers over the individual subject (Foucault, 1980). As a consequence, interview material 'should be understood not as true and accurate reflection of some aspect of an external world, but as something to be explained and accounted for through the discursive rules and themes that predominate in a particular socio-historical context' (Prior 1997:70).

How then, can the use of interviews be defended, if the subject is discouraged as the origin of motives and thought? In his 'postmodern' analysis of management practice, Alvesson (2002) suggests to use what he calls 'discursive pragmatism' as a framework used for the analysis of interviews. This framework allows for a combination of employing a post-structuralist framework to interview materials, while also drawing on a simpler interpretative approach where necessary. Discursive pragmatism can best be described as a two-pronged strategy: where it seems reasonable, interview findings are indeed interpreted as reflections of social practices or the 'inner life' of interviewees. In other instances, interviews are seen as a combination of localist influences (such as the position/role of the interviewer/interviewee, location of interviews, gender, age, professional background) and the drawing upon dominant discourses, 'operating behind and on the subject' (Alvesson, 2002: 114). Discourses invoked by interviewees in the specific situation take over and produce certain kind of statements. The

approach of 'discursive pragmatism' also had implications for the design of interview questions and in terms of actual interview practice, an issue which will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. The adoption of a pragmatic approach to theorizing the position of the interview and subsequently also handling the analysis of interviews arguably leaves the analyst with considerable leeway as to which aspects of interviews to highlight in particular instances. This opens up possible critiques in relation to the arbitrariness and lack of systematic rigor of interview analysis on the one hand, and the possibility of oversimplification of discursive analysis on the other. Without suggesting to have resolved these challenges related to some of the fundamental shortcomings of 'discursive pragmatism', it was useful to keep them in the back of my mind so as to continuously check on my chosen analytical angle adopted in the analysis of specific statements. It is also important to state that I do not view the adoption of 'discursive pragmatism' as a denial of or compromising the principles of Foucauldian discourse analysis or post-structuralism in general. After a first reading of my interview data collected during this study, I considered it as fruitful to interpret interview statements at certain points as reflections of 'true' practices or impressions. Not doing so, would have for example not allowed me to consider important aspects which emerged through the work, e.g. how young people's active participation was institutionally facilitated or not across projects. Given the field of social policy analysis and the interrogation of concrete interventions such as GYDPs I considered the adoption of such an eclectic approach where appropriate as more beneficial than staying within the orthodox confines of post-structuralism.

### **Choosing methods and undertaking research: Constructing the policy archive**

The following section chronologically outlines the details of the research process undertaken to analyse the relevant policy archives as well as to engage with selected GYDPs through project workers and JLOs. As a first step, the textual archive of official policy documents and available documentation in relation to GYDPs was undertaken. My exclusive focus at this level of analysis on official government discourse was prompted by my broader research objectives. Particularly, as I was interested to see how and to what extent official policy discourses delimit project workers' and JLOs' possibilities for 'being' and 'acting'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> While this might seem contrary to the Foucauldian assertion of ubiquitous power, this focus on official policy discourse and project workers' and JLOs' negotiation of these, does not mean that this is the only axis along which power travels in relation to youth crime prevention policy and GYDP project discourse, but the one I chose to analyse in depth.

The decision to take a closer look at *contemporary* project discourse without the attempt to provide a precise genealogy of project discourse, as opposed to a contextual analysis as provided here, is based both on the focus of research questions as well as limited by the availability of materials. Due to the nature of the projects, materials that would have allowed me to analyse official project discourse before what I consider the 'contemporary' period in terms of the GYDP's governance (2005 -2011), was sparse. During what I define to be the first time period of the project development (1991-1998) issues in relation to the projects were communicated through Garda Headquarter Circulars, which were not publicly available, and their content could only be derived from secondary sources<sup>8</sup>. During the second time period (1999-2004) two large studies leading to the publication of the first set of GYDP guidelines (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003) were although signed off by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs, authored by independent researchers at the Dublin Institute of Technology. I therefore did not want to include them in my formal analysis of official project discourse.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the corpus of relevant policy analysed was produced between 2003 and 2011. The end of 2011 was decided as the pragmatic cutting off point for collection of materials, as this coincided with the final phase of write-up of this study.

Another challenge which arose in relation to the construction of my GYDP textual archive was that official policy guidance and documentation on the GYDPs, with the exception of two sets of project guidelines, has been quite patchy, particularly in the period before 2010. The projects always operated under the auspices of An Garda Síochána, however, reporting done prior to the Children Act 2001 was rather minimal for the Juvenile Diversion Programme; and since then has focused exclusively on the Diversion Programme.<sup>10</sup> Virtually no information on the GYDPs is contained in the Annual Reports of An Garda Síochána, the Annual Reports of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme, or the An Garda Síochána's Strategy Statements, which have been published twice following the 2005 An Garda Síochána Act. It is also telling that the PULSE system which has only since 2010 been linked to the JLOs and the Diversion Programme, does not contain any possibility for information to be provided in relation to the projects. In an attempt to obtain more materials

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<sup>8</sup> Only two official documents provide a glimpse into the scope and intended impact of the projects during this first time period: Garda Special Project Guidelines of 1992 and A Garda Headquarter Circular from 1998, both issued directly from Garda Community Relations and not publicly available.

<sup>9</sup> These two studies include Bowden, M. and Higgins, L. (2000) and CSER/DIT (2001).

<sup>10</sup> See various annual reports on the of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme, commenced in 2004, as appointed under Part 4 of the Children Act 2001.

on the projects from the ‘policy perspective’ of the Gardai, I reviewed the official An Garda Siochana magazine- the *Garda Review*- from 1962 onwards but it only included a few descriptive articles on the projects. Apart from the more recent publication of the *Garda Children and Youth Strategy* in 2009, summarising An Garda’s position and strategy in relation to children and young people, overall official discourse about the projects from An Garda Siochana is rather limited.

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the textual archive compiled for the analysis of ‘contemporary youth crime prevention policy’. As is evident from Table 2.1, I also draw on materials such as speeches and conference presentations from 2008 onwards, where written materials or recordings were available. I considered the inclusion of this material important as it allowed me to demonstrate the systematic nature of the current official public policy discourse on youth crime prevention. This enabled me to make explicit the ‘power effects’ of discourse: a single text typically has minimal effects, whereas the repetition and recursive nature of discourses in different texts and across different discourse planes can have knowledge constituting effects: ‘...a discourse with its recurring contents, symbols and strategies, leads to the emergence and solidification of ‘knowledge’ and therefore has sustained effects. What is important is not the single text.... but the constant repetition of statements’ (Jaeger and Meyer, 2009:38).

**Table 2.1 Textual Archive: Contemporary Youth Crime Prevention Policy**

Year of Publication	Author	Title	Source Type
<b>National Policy Documents</b>			
2002	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs	<i>Tackling the Underlying Causes of Crime</i>	Official Report
2003	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs	<i>A Crime Prevention Strategy for Ireland</i>	Official Strategy
2005	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs	<i>Report on the Youth Justice Review</i>	Official Report (HC)
2008	Mr. Brendan Smith, Minister of Children	<i>Opening Address, First Biennial Youth Justice Conference</i>	Speech, Transcript
2008	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010</i>	Official Strategy (HC)
2009	An Garda Siochana	<i>Youth and Children Strategy 2009-2011</i>	Official Strategy (HC) document
2011	Department of Justice, Equality and Law	<i>White Paper on Crime Prevention</i>	Consultation Documents (as of

	Affairs		November 2011)
<b>Newsletters and Reports</b>			
2008	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Newsletter, Issue 1, Summer 2008</i>	Newsletter
2009	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Annual Report 2008</i>	Official Report
2009	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Newsletter, Issue 2, Spring 2009</i>	Official Newsletter
2009	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Newsletter, Issue 3, Winter 2009</i>	Official Newsletter
2010	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Annual Report 2009</i>	Official Report
2010	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Newsletter, Issue4, Spring 2010</i>	Official Newsletter
2010	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Newsletter, Issue 5, Autumn 2010</i>	Official Newsletter
2011	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Annual Report 2010</i>	Official Report
<b>Oral Presentations</b>			
2008	Ms. Michelle Shannon, Director, IYJS,	<i>Recent Youth Justice Reforms, First Biennial Youth Justice Conference</i>	Speech, Powerpoint
2008	Mr. Sean Redmond and Mr. Tim Chapman	<i>How do you get there from here? Gaining momentum for improvement in youth justice practice, First Biennial Youth Justice Conference</i>	Speech-Powerpoint presentation only
2010	Ms. Michelle Shannon, National Director, IYJS	<i>Opening Remarks 2010 Irish Youth Justice Service Conference</i>	Speech-Transcript
2010	Mr. Barry Andrews, Minister of Children and Youth Affairs	<i>Opening Remarks 2010 Irish Youth Justice Service Conference</i>	Speech-Audiofile



Table 2.2 summarises the materials I could obtain in relation to the GYDPs, partly from official sources, and partly from individual projects that I visited during my fieldwork.

**Table 2.2 Textual Archive: Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

Year of Publication	Author	Title	Source Type
<b>National GYDP Policy</b>			
2003	An Garda Síochána	<i>Garda Youth Diversion Project Guidelines</i>	Official Project Guidelines
2009	An Garda Síochána	<i>Children and Young People Strategy</i>	Official Policy Document
2009	Mr. Sean Redmond, Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>A baseline analysis of Garda Youth Diversion Projects: Considering Complexities in Understanding Youth Crime in Local Communities</i>	Professional Article, Irish Probation Journal, Volume 6, September 2009
2010	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Garda Youth Diversion Projects, Operational Guidelines</i>	Official Project Guidelines
2010	Irish Youth Justice Service	<i>Designing effective local responses to youth crime – a baseline analysis</i>	Baseline Analysis
<b>Oral Presentations</b>			
2010	Mr Seán Redmond - Head of Young Offender Programmes, Irish Youth Justice Service & Supt. Colette Quinn - Garda Office for Children and Youth Affairs	<i>Working together to reduce youth crime</i> presented at 2010 IYJS Conference	Speech, Audiofile
2010	IYJS	<i>Garda Youth Diversion Projects/Feedback Seminars</i>	Power Point Presentation
<b>Project Documentation</b>			
2008	GYDP 11	<i>Garda Youth Project Annual Report</i>	Project Sample Annual Report
2010	IYJS	<i>Online Forum Overview</i>	Conference Handout
2010	GYDP 1	<i>Core Profile</i>	Profiling Document
2011	IYJS	<i>Active Listening</i>	Training Material
2011	John, J. Wilson, Acting Administrator, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, December 2000	<i>Functional Family Therapy</i>	Training Handout

2011	Compiled and distributed by IYJS	<i>Risk and Protective Factors</i>	Training Handout
2011	IYJS	<i>Quarterly Performance Review &amp; Guidelines</i>	Official Reporting Documents
2011	IYJS, An Garda Siochana, University of Ulster	<i>Motivational Interviewing- Training Programme</i>	Training Material
2011	IYJS, An Garda Siochana, University of Ulster	<i>Pro-social modelling- Training programme</i>	Training material
2011	IYJS	<i>Reframing</i>	Training Material
2011	IYJS	<i>Annual Plan- Blank Template</i>	Official Reporting Document
2011	IYJS	<i>Annual Plan- Explanatory Notes</i>	Official Reporting Document

In the case of Table 2.2, the initial challenge was not to sample available documents but to actually obtain them in the first place and to obtain a sufficient corpus of documents in terms of the GYDPS more specifically. With regards to the definition of the textual archive of official youth crime prevention policy (Table 2.1), the challenge was how to delineate the corpus. The elasticity and ubiquity of the term ‘crime prevention’ as discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, is directly reflected in the complex landscape of Irish youth crime prevention, both in terms of actors involved and types of interventions conceived. This diversity had direct implications for the construction of the policy archive and as a consequence, it is important at this stage to outline how I addressed the construction of the policy archive, given the quite broad range of interventions and actors involved included in youth crime prevention.

Two documents demonstrate the broad scope within which youth crime prevention has become understood contemporaneously. In 2002, the Department of Justice commissioned the compilation of a *Crime Prevention Directory* which set out to ‘compile a directory of crime prevention measures operating in the State’ (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2002:9). Unsurprisingly, interventions aimed at or including young people, can be found under almost every sub-heading: alcohol and drugs; families and children; men; neighbourhood watch; offending; training and research; travellers; victims; women. In addition, a separate

section of 50 pages, entitled 'youth', forms the single largest section of the entire document, including interventions funded by a range of statutory bodies and in the main implemented by voluntary agencies, often on a project rather than on a more institutionalised, long-term basis. This range is not exceptional in the context of the Irish welfare state, where major services are outsourced to civil society organisations and where many issues are addressed on an ad-hoc basis, rather than through systematic forward planning (Quinn, 2002).

Similarly, the Irish Youth Justice Review of 2005 (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005) provides an overview of crime prevention initiatives provided by statutory agencies for children and young people. The table illustrated in Appendix 4, compiled from the 2005 review, provides a broad overview of the main youth crime prevention initiatives operating in Ireland. Again, it is evident that responsibility for 'youth crime prevention' is perceived to be the shared responsibility of different government departments and agencies, including the Probation and Welfare Service, An Garda Síochána, the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The selection of the policy archive as presented in Table 2.1 was limited to the Department of Justice, the Irish Youth Justice Service and An Garda Síochána, to make the analysis more feasible, but also based on the rationale that these are the organisations responsible for the management and funding of the GYDPs.

### **Analysing the policy archive**

The analysis of the policy archives was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved the identification of general themes emerging through the detailed reading of the entire archive and the second consisted of a closer analysis of the respective themes using the analytical tools of genealogical discourse analysis, deconstructive reading and rhetorical analysis, as described earlier in this chapter.

The first reading was thus largely descriptive and what Ketz de Vries and Miller (1987) call 'establishing the surface' of a text. I tried to be as inclusive as possible and initially did not exclude themes which appeared in the respective document only in a minor way. This meant that in this first reading, I essentially constructed a detailed conceptual map entailing the comprehensive content of each document in the policy archive. This resulted in a lengthy, although manually manageable list of themes, covered in this first stage of reading. At the

same time, this first reading process was an iterative one, which means that the reading was on the one hand by the research questions and the reviewed literature and on the other hand by an extensive and inclusive reading of the concerned documents to also capture other emerging themes. Consequently, I was interested to identify what constructions of young people and their offending behaviour were contained in the specific documents. I also sought to explore what factors were understood as contributing to offending behaviour and how these factors were determined. Additionally, I also identified themes in some of the documents which were not part of my core research interest, such as for example the role of the Probation Service and new community sanctions introduced for young people.

The final list of themes selected for closer analysis from this more extensive list obtained through the first reading, included those themes which emerged repetitively across the entire policy archive and which I could - based on their repetitive occurrence in clearly distinguishable patterns- identify as 'discourse strands'.<sup>11</sup> Jaeger (1999:1992) describes this process as reducing the 'corpus' of data to a 'dossier'. He usefully highlights how the selection of relevant themes in this process is not so much about 'sampling' (i.e. making a small selection) but about capturing all the relevant themes and sub-themes. The first reading then accomplished the description of the 'archive' i.e. making explicit the statements which provide the link between the 'sayable and the visible': which themes (or 'topics') emerged, in which order did they emerge and what was omitted. Thus, I examined here 'the finite spectrum of what was said and sayable at a particular point in time' (Jaeger and Meier, 2009:46) in relation to young people, offending behaviour and prevention of offending behaviour.

In a second reading, I then focused on using the analytical tools described above, i.e. Foucauldian discourse analysis, deconstruction and rhetoric to the analysis of the texts. In this manner, I focused the analysis on how statements produced as part of discursive strands functioned and what effects they produced. More specifically two interrelated aspects, part and parcel of Foucault's genealogical discourse analysis, have also guided my reading of policy texts: the identification of discursive objects and subject positions and the emphasis on 'power' (Foucault, 1972). Building on the identification of different discourse strands by making explicit the 'statements' which make up these respective discourse strands, I sought to

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<sup>11</sup> Jaeger and Maier elaborate on the term 'discourse strand': 'The concept of 'discourse strands' is similar to the one of 'discourses'. The difference is that 'discourse' is the more abstract concept, located at the level of statements (*énoncés*). 'Discourse strands', in contrast, are conceived at the level of concrete utterances (*énonciations*) or performances located on the surface of texts' (Jaeger and Maier, 2009: 46).

make their 'functions' explicit. On this basis, I continuously asked how different statements, constituting a discourse strand, functioned and queried how they functioned in terms of creating objects of knowledge. The evidence provided by the research participants was constantly questioned as to how their statements created subjects and how these subjects related to one another. By making explicit the bodies of knowledge, both specialist and non-specialist, that were drawn upon in speaking 'objects of knowledge' into existence, as well as by identifying technologies of governance devised to 'operationalise' these different knowledge regimes to govern subjects, I further attempted to demonstrate how power was wielded and dispersed throughout the youth crime prevention landscape.

In further acknowledgement of the post-structuralist understanding that texts are imbued with power, I also applied some tools of deconstruction to the reading of the textual materials. From this perspective, texts are designed to order and define a specific perception of 'reality' by presenting 'dominant categories' as natural. Applying a deconstructive lens to policy texts allowed me to 'unpack' these categories. This strategy enabled me to make explicit what was left out or remained concealed in the text and to identify binaries, i.e. what was considered as 'desirable' and as 'undesirable' and which inherent contradictions existed in the specific text.

Finally, throughout my reading of policy texts, I also utilised rhetorical analysis, mainly to clarify the exigency expressed in the respective texts, i.e. how persuasion was attempted and which state of imperfection 'ought' to be urgently addressed (Leach, 2000). I found this particularly helpful in enabling me to clarify the underlying rationale and strategy deployed through the specific texts. I also identified several rhetorical strategies which appeared repeatedly throughout the analysed texts for the purpose of strengthening the different discourse strands through specific language usage. While rhetorical analysis is not strictly speaking located in post-structuralism, I adopted what Alvesson (2002) calls 'discursive pragmatism', discussed earlier in this chapter and took the liberty to combine both post-structuralist and interpretative approaches (including rhetorical analysis).

## **Interviewing project workers and JLOs**

Project workers and JLOs are the main reference points for young people engaging in the GYDPs and the two professional groups involved in the projects. The critical discourse analyst Fairclough (1992:227) comments on how interview data can enhance the corpus of data being used when conducting discourse analysis:

‘One can interview those involved as participants in corpus samples, not only to elicit their interpretations of those samples, but also as an opportunity for the researcher to probe into issues which go beyond the sample as such...The point to emphasize is that interviews, panels, and so forth, are further discourse samples’.

To identify how project workers and JLOs engage with dominant discursive constructions identified in official policy and project discourse, I set out to conduct semi-structured interviews with a sample of GYDP personnel. The approach of conducting semi-structured interviews was based on several rationales. First, it allowed me to probe how project workers and JLOs related to the dominant discourses identified in the earlier policy analysis, while at the same time, it left enough space and flexibility for them to raise specific topics and issues which were relevant to them - both in relation to the questions posed, but also beyond. In this way, semi-structured interviews supported the research goal to identify the ways in which official youth crime prevention discourse percolated to practitioners on the ground. One of the main differences between the ubiquitous use of the term ‘discourse’ and the systematic study of discourse is that the systematic patterns of statements has to be proven to establish the existence, linkage etc. of discourses. Conversations with multiple project workers and JLOs were therefore appropriate, to investigate how different project stakeholders are involved in the reproduction of or the negotiation of resistance to official policy and project discourses.

Second, semi-structured interviews allowed me to talk to project workers and JLOs across a range of projects. As has been noted earlier, one of the GYDPs’ features has always been their individuality in different aspects, such as numbers of young people worked with, programmes offered for project participants, management structures, etc. (see Higgins and Bowden 2000). As a consequence, I was interested to have conversations with project workers and JLOs across a variety of projects. This is what led to the decision to conduct semi-structured interviews

rather than for example to engage in an in-depth case study of only one or two projects which would only have allowed for the views of a small number of personnel to be ascribed.

### **Designing the interview guide**

In preparation for the interviews, I designed two interview guides: one for project workers and one for JLOs respectively (see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). Both interview guides contained three main sections, including a total of 32 questions, which were devised on the basis of the initial research questions as well as emergence of official youth crime prevention discourses as identified in the policy analysis, conducted before the interviews commenced. The first section sought to focus on the respective project worker or JLO involved in the project, how he/she had come to their position, his/her professional background, his/her understanding of the GYDPs general purpose and objectives and his/her identification of the important principles when working with young people. The second section then addressed young people and their offending behaviour, i.e. how project workers and JLOs conceptualised young people, their offending behaviour and the interventions offered by the projects. The third section queried different aspects of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) and how project workers and JLOs engaged with it. Finally, I also included a list of questions, to elicit respondents' respective professional and training backgrounds and the length of the time they were employed in their posts.

In formulating the questions, I tried to avoid constructing questions too narrowly around the dominant discourses identified in policy analysis, while also touching upon these issues. Hence, I designed relatively open questions, which also provided additional room for probing into meaning etc. I also attempted to design the questions in such way that was in line with my theoretical approach. The emphasis of questions was therefore designed not with the interview subject as the centre of meaning and experience, but with a view to examine broader social patterns (for example the reflection of actuarialist/new public management discourse) related to language use (Alvesson, 2002). The interview guide was piloted with two project workers who were not part of the research study. Their feedback and my experience gathered of utilising the interview schedule were used to refine the interview guide, particularly in terms of avoiding repetitive questions and reformulating unclear ones.

## Project selection and organising access

In terms of selecting project workers and JLOs for participation in project interviews, I was interested to involve a range of different types of projects, based on three main parameters: project location (urban; rural; suburban), managing parent organisation and pilot status, i.e. whether the project was participating in the first pilot phase of the recent reform process instigated by the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS).<sup>12</sup> I had also received recommendations from a meeting I had organised with an IYJS official to gather information about the latest developments in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) process with regards to some projects which were working with innovative strategies of engaging young people, and I tried to include some of these projects also.

Each of the projects employed two full time project workers and was associated with the respective local JLO. Projects involved a number of other individuals as well in their work with young people, depending on local circumstances, mainly CE workers, volunteers and other part-time/sessional professionals. However, project workers and JLOs were the groups of individuals who were most regularly involved with young people on the projects, as well as with the local management and the Irish Youth Justice Service on a regular basis. Therefore, I decided to focus on these two groups of interview participants. In terms of numbers it appeared feasible and sufficient to conduct interviews with two project workers and one JLO in ten different sites in the given timeframe of my research, totalling a number of 30 planned interviews. Based on these selection criteria, I designed a 'wish-list' of 10 projects. This list included two independently managed projects, an additional 5 management organisations, 2 projects participating in the piloting phase, and a spread across rural and urban areas. However, in the process of organising access to these projects, several projects' participation did not materialise. Thus, I did not manage to organise participation of two JLOs in my research study. In both of these cases, I did not receive an explicit negative response, but a response was avoided in several instances of establishing contact. With regards to project workers, I did not manage to organise interviews with two project workers on two different projects. Despite following up through their respective colleagues who I had already interviewed, these two project workers on two different projects were not forthcoming. What is typically called 'data saturation' in social research is as in any other qualitative research

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<sup>12</sup> 5 projects have been selected nationally as part of the first pilot phase initiated in 2009; a further 10 have been selected and have commenced as part of the second pilot phase as of autumn 2011 (after the interview period).



approaches up to the researcher's judgement. In discourse analysis, particularly those types of discourse analysis that do not prioritise linguistic methods, 'a relatively small amount of qualitative data suffices' (Jaeger and Meyer, 2009:51) to reach the point where no new findings can be identified: 'The arguments and contents that can be read or heard about a particular topic (e.g. immigration) at a particular time in a particular social location are amazingly limited' (Jaeger and Meyer, 2009:51).

All of these ten projects were first contacted by email to formally outline the purpose of the research and what participation would entail. Matters of confidentiality and anonymity were also clearly discussed in this email (see Appendix 9). Each of these emails was followed up with phone calls to the respective project coordinators and JLOs to discuss their response to my request for participation in the research. Most of the responses I received during the follow-up phone calls were positive. One team of project workers wanted to double check with their line managers for permission to participate in the study (which was later given), however all others were immediately agreeable to participate in the study. It was also at this early stage that I informed project workers that I would like to record the interviews to facilitate my analysis.

Although I did not get any explicit negative response from any of the projects approached, three project coordinators evaded definite approvals. With these projects, I followed up two more times, but then evaluated their responses as indications of an unwillingness to participate. In the meantime, two other project coordinators who had agreed to participate in my research referred me to other projects and recommended to their colleagues to participate in my study. I felt it was important to follow-up on their recommendation, to demonstrate my appreciation for their participation in my research as well as their effort to organise further participants. Through these recommendations, I ended up involving 12 different GYDPs in the study, conducted a total of 28 interviews with 22 (2 of which were conducted in pairs) project workers and 8 JLOs. Thus, the final list of participating projects as well as interview partners slightly deviated from the initial list due to non-response of some projects as well as identification of further projects to contact through the interview process ('snowballing' see e.g. Silverman, 1993). Nevertheless, the variety of factors aimed for in my original 'wish-list' was maintained on this final list of projects. Table 2.3 summarises the final list of projects interviewed and some more relevant details, including the total number of interviews conducted and the total number of interview participants. In addition, I also had two meetings

before and during the fieldwork with an IYJS official as well as a youth work manager whose input I also draw on and reference where appropriate in the findings and analysis presented. These conversations were not included in the key interview corpus, but these conversations were useful in explaining the reform process underway and the challenges experienced by the different stakeholders. I visited the majority of the sample of projects on two occasions, as it was often only possible to interview only one project worker at the time.

**Table 2.3 Overview of participating projects and interview partners**

	<b>Project Location</b>	<b>Year of Establishment</b>	<b>Pilot Phase</b>	<b>Management Organisation</b>	<b>No of interviews</b>	<b>Interview participants</b>
<b>Projects</b>						
<b>GYDP 1</b>	Suburban	2007	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	Regional YW Org 1	2	2 PW;
<b>GYDP 2</b>	Suburban	2000	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	National YW Org 1	3	2 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 3</b>	Suburban	1998	-	National YW Org 2	3	2 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 4</b>	Inner city	1998	-	Regional YW Org 2	1	2 PW
<b>GYDP 5</b>	Suburban	2007	-	National YW Org 2	3	2 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 6</b>	Rural town	2007	-	Regional YW Org 3	1	2 PW
<b>GYDP 7</b>	Town	2007	-	Regional YW Org 4	2	1 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 8</b>	Inner city	2008	-	Regional YW Org 5	3	2 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 9</b>	Rural town	2008	-	Regional YW Org 4	3	2 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 10</b>	Town	1999	1 <sup>st</sup> phase	Regional YW Org 6	3	2 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 11</b>	Town	2007	-	National YW Org 1	3	2 PW; 1 JLO
<b>GYDP 12</b>	Suburban	1994	-	Independent	1	1 PW
				<b>Total no.</b>	<b>Total no.</b>	<b>Total no.</b>
				<b>9</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>

Appendix 1 and 2 provide more details of interviews conducted, including a short project description, descriptions of interview participants and some of their relevant details, the dates of the interviews conducted and the length of time they took, and a short description of the relevant project location. Projects included in my study represented eight different management organisations and one independently management project. Also, two of the largest management organisations were represented by two projects respectively. Similarly, I have achieved to interview project participants across a variety number of locations. Projects interviewed were located in 5 suburban locations, 2 in inner-city locations and 5 projects were located in towns or rural towns. Significantly, two projects participating in my study had participated in the first pilot phase of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), and one project had been accepted to participate in the second pilot phase, which was in the process of being

set up at the time of conducting the research. It was notable that the large majority of JLOs interviewed on the projects tended to be members of the Gardai for at least 10 years, as the role of the JLO is seen as a specialised position based on significant experiences in different roles in the Gardai. Project workers interviewed came from a wide variety of training backgrounds with different levels of youth work qualifications and several others such as teaching, social care, social work, and some other backgrounds. Project workers' backgrounds also varied in terms of their duration employed on the projects, from a minimum of 3 months to over 10 years.

In preparation of the fieldwork, I was advised by an IYJS official to officially inform the IYJS Director as well as the Garda Superintendent/Head of Garda Youth and Community Affairs at Garda Headquarters of this research study. This was done by sending two separate letters to the officials concerned (Appendix 10).

### **Conducting interviews, confidentiality and anonymity**

Interviews were conducted in project premises or in JLO's offices. Only one interview with a JLO was conducted in a cafe, after having met the JLO at the local Garda Station. Where both project workers agreed to be interviewed on the same day, I attempted to interview project workers separately. However, in the case of three projects, project workers wanted to be interviewed in pairs. In these instances, I tried to ensure that both project workers would respond separately to all the questions posed. Nevertheless, it was to be expected that the presence of their respective colleagues would due to a variety of sensorial and normative effects influence responses of interview participants conducted in a pair setting. In presenting my interview findings and conducting the analysis, it was difficult to account for these effects. In addition, it appeared that independent of each others' presence, project workers' narratives in the one to one interviews, also reflected the working culture which permeated in each project, as was signified by often similar narratives drawn upon by project workers and JLOs interviewed separately on the same project. This also made it very difficult to determine the joint interview effect with great certainty.

The average interview length with project workers lasted 50 minutes, with interviews ranging from 50 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes, depending on how detailed or extensive interview participants engaged with the questions. While some chose to answer rather narrowly to

posed questions, including the informal follow-up questions, others were more forthcoming with more anecdotes, examples etc. The interview length tended to also be shorter in the case of those project workers, whose time in their posts had been of shorter duration. In the case of interviews with JLOs, interviews on average lasted 45 minutes, with interviews ranging from 38 minutes to 1 hour and 3 minutes.

Throughout the interviews it was usually not necessary to go through all of the questions chronologically, as project workers and JLOs through their open engagement with previous questions also answered some of the ensuing questions. In addition, the interview process was also guided by my interest in interrogating 'script-following' by interview participants. Alvesson (2002) suggests that the pragmatist approach, demands of the interviewer an awareness of how dominant discourses can lead to script-following.<sup>13</sup> This can be achieved by previous familiarization with and 'unpacking' of dominant categories and following up responses where standard jargon is used seeking to elicit alternative formulations, e.g. 'can you talk to me about that using other words?' This may trigger responses that are not script coherent. Where it seemed to me to be important, I indicated in the analysis of the interview data if a particular statement was prompted by a specific statement on my behalf.

Interviews were all recorded to ease transcription and analysis. All interview participants were agreeable to being recorded, as I had repeatedly assured them that I would do my utmost to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. This was particularly important in a setting such as the GYDPs, given the relatively small community of professionals who meet on a regular basis. It was also important in relation to the sensitivity of some of the questions asked, specifically in relation to the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The relative safety of the interview situation was sometimes referred to by project workers throughout the interviews as the reason when sharing opinions they claimed they would not discourse in other fora.

To ensure project workers' and JLOs' anonymity, I have replaced project workers' names with synonyms, which in some instances also included a change in gender. I have further excluded any narratives relating to young people or specific locations which were used by project workers or JLOs and which might make a young person or their families recognisable, or link the particular story to an interview participant. In addition, I have also not disclosed information which might make project workers or JLOs identifiable to each other, such as very

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<sup>13</sup> Script-following describes the possibility of interview participants following or reproducing dominant discourses without necessarily being aware of this process.

specific details on project workers' training background, etc. Appendix 1 which is intended to provide an overview of the variety of project locations, project workers (in terms of their training backgrounds, length of employment on a GYDP) and projects (project location, pilot phase, year of project establishment) have been disassembled so as to further increase the anonymity of all interview participants.

The fieldwork also enabled me to get access to materials that are publicly not available, but are used as core elements of the projects' work with young people. These materials were included in the textual archive outlined in Table 2.2 and were usefully employed to enrich the analysis. I also kept a fieldwork journal which I consulted while writing up the analysis. Here I noted and recorded what I observed during visits to projects where I managed to witness first hand some activities conducted within the framework of the projects, thus providing me with insights relevant for the study.

### **Analysing the research interviews**

The preparation of the interview analysis was preceded by the detailed transcription and proofing of the recorded interviews. The transcription was undertaken by me and it involved paying attention to detail. In total approximately 450 pages of materials was transcribed. To better manage this vast amount of interview data I used NVivo<sup>14</sup> to guide the thematic analysis. This was particularly useful as themes emerged in different variations across responses to different interview questions, which made the systematic coding of the material much more important. As a consequence, I conducted manual 'bottom-up' coding (Bazeley, 2007:67), which resulted in a detailed list of over one hundred themes which were raised by interview participants across the interviews conducted. The list thus included categories such as 'volunteers', 'voluntary participation', 'young people older than 18', 'anti-social behaviour', 'emotional challenges' to name a few. Here, I attempted to stay as close to the interview data and not assign my own interpretation to the detailed themes.

As a next step, I proceeded to group these themes under several sub-headings which made the material more manageable. These sub-headings were defined by me and sub-themes were assigned based on the analytical process of simplifying the lengthy list of obtained sub-themes. As a consequence, I obtained a list of ten over-arching themes to which I assigned the detailed

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<sup>14</sup> NVivo is a qualitative research software which supports the collection, organisation and analysis of qualitative research data, such as interviews, focus groups, audio-visual materials, etc.

sub-themes. So for example, I decided to group the sub-themes of 'value for money', 'recession', and 'measurement' under the subheading of 'new public management', as they all resonated with this larger theme. Within these larger themes, I then proceeded with the analysis of different 'types' of engagement with these themes. So for example, under the theme 'new public management', I obtained a variety of engagements with the issue, such as open criticism, understanding of the importance of new public management, challenges related to daily work practices etc. I subsequently described these different types of engagement with a theme in my own words, paying attention to describing both emerging patterns as well as variability in the data (see description of the first step of interview analysis below). I also compiled a list of all relevant quotes which would support each of these types of engagement with specific themes and at a later stage narrowed those down to present a readable piece of analysis. In the discussion of quotations from the raw data, I further paid attention to identifying and explicitly stating whether the selected quotation represented an individual opinion or was part of a more general trend emerging in the data. The quotations presented in the thesis have been edited in some extents as indicated by the insertion of '...' so that the reader could follow the discursive theme and argumentation pursued by the respective interview participant. I paid great attention to doing this in a diligent way and only in those cases where the deletion of comments (e.g. unrelated chit-chat) would not take away from the content of a statement. I also thought that this was justifiable as I did not base my analysis on a linguistic type of analysis. In general, while focusing on dominant discourse strands, I also tried to show the variety and nuanced differences in obtained responses.

Following the coding process, the first step of interview analysis could be described as searching for patterns in the data in the form of both variability and consistency in order to form tentative hypotheses about the functions of particular features of discourse (Potter and Wetherell 1987). For example, I sought through the coding of different descriptions of young people, to get an impression of the breadth of different descriptions used, while also looking for similarities which could be grouped under broader headings. In this way, I reached a starting point from where I could look at how these different discursive themes constructed the youthful subject.

The second step of interview analysis then focused on the investigation of various functions of discourses, particularly in relation to project workers subjectification and their deployment of different strategies of resistance. In this regard Rosalind Gill's reference to Widdicombe's

(1993) idea of 'the analyst's task is to identify each problem and how what is said constitutes a solution' (Gill, 2000:182) was particularly useful. So for example, in this second step I focused my attention on the different ways project workers and JLOs described interventions with young people aimed at reducing their offending behaviour. In doing this, I sought to extract how the problem of offending behaviour was implicitly constructed.

Furthermore, I also paid attention to how discursive constructions drew on the earlier discussed dominant discourses and/or how they mobilised alternative discourses. The concept of 'interdiscursivity' was particularly helpful here, as it supported an analysis of how project workers' and JLO's discourses 'hooked' into other discourses. For example, my analysis revealed that discursive constructions of young people 'hooked' into a range of expert or professional discourses such as psychology or law, more populist discourses related to 'puberty', and official policy discourses, such as individual responsibility and initiative. At this stage, several rhetorical concepts also helped to analyse how project workers and JLOs strengthened and positioned particular discursive constructions.

It has to be noted that I decided to focus on a thematic presentation of interview data rather than presenting entire narratives of different interview participants across the range of topics discussed. While the latter approach would be highly interesting as well, I considered the approach of thematic analysis and presentation more suited for the purposes of the type of discourse analysis undertaken in this thesis. Thus the type of thematic analysis presented in this thesis facilitated the assessment of the effects of official policy discourses on interview participants' discursive constructions on a number of different themes. Nevertheless, in addition to providing some of interview participants' relevant details in Appendix 1, I also tried to provide some degree of contextualisation in the text in relation to interview participants' background, where I considered it as a useful addition to the analysis of their statements.

### **Validity, reflexivity and caveats**

The issue of 'validity' in discourse analysis such as the one undertaken in this thesis is a more fluid one than maybe in other qualitative approaches which seek to make broader claims with regards to their research findings. Particularly in post-structuralist approaches to analysis, more subjective processes for assessing the 'validity' of social research, such as 'care, awareness and insightful handling of the production/construction processes' and 'care in the

interpretation of it' (Alvesson, 2002:166) can be drawn upon. Ultimately however, the interpretation provided in this thesis, does not claim to be the 'final' or 'correct' interpretation, but one of many possible 'readings' of the obtained policy and interview materials. By combining the use of both policy and interview analysis I sought to capture a wider picture of contemporary youth crime prevention policy and practice than would be possible if I only looked at one or the other. This strategy made also room for looking at how project personnel related to official crime prevention and diversion discourses. In order to demonstrate the variety of responses, while also identifying dominant discursive themes, I attempted to capture variation on the one hand and patterns of regularity on the other.

Reflexivity in social research is typically understood as reflecting upon one's own positionality with regards to the research process and setting (May and Perry, 2011). Two specific aspects of reflexivity were most useful in this research setting. The first one refers to the realisation that the discursive analytic approach adopted throughout this research implies a reorientation from looking for causalities towards a systematic critique of the discursive body (Jaeger, 1999). An awareness of the intellectual body from which this critique is drawn is then a condition for the 'reflexive' researcher to achieve. Thus, I was aware when designing and conducting the research, that the research was framed and informed by the body of literature (see chapter 4) which has engaged in a critical manner with some of these discursive constructions (e.g. risk, evidence, partnerships) emerging in contemporary Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP discourses. These reflections on this particular reading of the GYDPs – and I don't claim for this to be more than *one* of many possible readings- was also encouraged by the post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis, as it posits the impossibility to ever arrive at one ultimate or 'right' interpretation. The second 'standard' of critique that I have tried to adopt throughout this thesis is in relation to what Alvesson (2002:171) describes as 'conscious and systematic efforts to view the subject matter from different angles, and to avoid strongly privileging a favoured one'. To do this, I genuinely tried to understand and represent the motivations and interests of *all* different voices emerging in both textual as well as interview analysis throughout the interviews. To achieve this, the post-structuralist claim of the impossibility to arrive at a possible final 'truth' and the genealogical insights of identifying contingencies, rather than causalities of particular knowledges was particularly helpful.

Finally, I want to highlight a caveat of this research particularly in relation to the interpretation of project workers' and JLOs' discursive accounts. It is important to remember that an



understanding of discourse as social practice has implications for understanding the individual subject and his/her utterances. As a consequence, the interpretation put forward does not suggest that a specific statement is a project workers' or JLO's final or definitive opinion on the issue being discussed: 'Actions and functions should not be thought of in cognitive terms, for example, as related to an individual's intentions; often they can be global or ideological and are best located as cultural practices rather than confined to somebody's head' (Gill, 2000:175). In the specific interview moment, a particular discursive construction was drawn upon by the respective interview participant, which was subsequently highlighted in the analysis. Statements made in interviews, were thus interpreted as elements of 'systems of dispersion' (Foucault, 1972:121), signifying dominant discourses and characterised simultaneously by contradictions and rifts.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter traced the development of the specifically Foucauldian understanding of discourse and genealogical discourse analysis as the main methodological tools deployed in this thesis. It has specifically discussed the four rules of formation constitutive of a genealogical discourse analysis and showed in detail how each of these shed light on different elements of Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy and practice, particularly the constitution of youth crime prevention through a variety of specialised and non-specialist discourses, the different subjectifying and objectifying effects of dominant discourses and the material impacts of dominant discourses. It has also highlighted how the power/knowledge factor central to genealogical discourse analysis is useful for interrogating representations of dominant knowledge categories and tracing the productive effects of these at various levels. This chapter has also shown how genealogical discourse analysis can be complemented by a deconstructive reading of dominant discourses and an analysis of rhetorical strategies deployed by policy makers to reiterate their positions. Post-structuralist social theory demands a reimagining of the role of policy texts and interview materials, and this chapter has shown how this thesis seeks to address this in a pragmatic way. Policy texts are read and analysed as 'textual sites of power' (Moss and Petrie, 2002:98) and interview interpretations as an assemblage of individual interpretations in interplay with dominant discourses. The second part of this chapter has described the different steps of the research process conducted, including the construction and analysis of policy archives, the preparation, conduct and analysis of interviews with project workers and JLOs.

### **Chapter 3**

## **Contextualising contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy and the Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

### **Introduction**

The first part of this chapter provides a multi-layered contextual analysis of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects from their early beginnings in 1991 to 2011<sup>1</sup>, within the context of three distinct time periods which have been identified in relation to the projects' overall governance. The first time period stretches from the very provisional and informal beginnings of the projects in 1991 to the year 1998. In this period the number of projects grew slowly but steadily and operated informally and with minimal supervision and guidance from Garda Headquarters- the administrative body, or the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs - the funding body. The second time period from 1999-2004 sees the projects' rapid expansion in terms of numbers and geographical distribution, while also taking up a more central role in national youth justice policy. During this time, more efforts were made to more systematically monitor and regulate the projects' work. Finally, the third time period from 2005-2011 constitutes the period of the most significant reforms in the history of the GYDPs. During this period, the establishment of the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2005 and the re-location of the projects under its auspices had visible repercussions on the projects. In relation to evaluating the key processes at work during these three time periods, this chapter pays particular attention to the rationale and role of the projects in wider youth crime prevention policy. The second part of this chapter focuses on the shifts and changes that occurred in relation to central parameters of the GYDPS. These transformations included changes to the projects' official objectives, the target groups of young people, work practice and administration. This section documents in detail how GYDP provision moved in a piecemeal manner from being an informal and largely obscure intervention to occupy a more central position in the Irish youth justice infrastructure. This section also contextualises the current status-quo of the projects as an intervention with its particular history and characteristics. Finally, the third part of this chapter critically explores the role of the voluntary youth work sector in youth crime prevention, with reference to the broader literature as well as in the specific context of the GYDPs. This final section seeks to contribute to the contextualisation of the interview findings

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<sup>1</sup> The cut-off point for the main body of materials collected for this study was December 2011.

(presented in Chapter 6) relating to project workers' and JLOs' understandings and negotiation of the role of youth work in project practice.

### **Phase 1: Early beginnings- an intervention under the radar (1991-1998)**

The establishment of the first two *Garda Special Projects*<sup>2</sup> in 1991 took place in the context of heightened concerns about youth crime. Ireland had seen a sharp rise in unemployment from the early 1980s onwards demarcated along lines of social class and specific locations (Ronayne, 1994:4). By 1992, Ireland's official unemployment rate of 17.8 was the second highest in the EU (Ronayne, 1994:2). Despite the failure to introduce any significant youth justice reforms as called for by several reports from the mid 1970s<sup>3</sup> onwards, concerns about youth crime and a 'tough-on-crime' political rhetoric formed part of political campaigns of all political parties who took turns in a politically unstable environment from 1987 to the 1997 (Daly, 2004). In the mid 1980s, the height of a typical moral panic regarding teenage joyriding, captured public and political attention. Several incidents had occurred where passers-by were injured and killed by joyriders. In the first three months of 1985 for example, 670 young people under 18 had been arrested for joyriding (Irish Times, 1985:8). Reportedly, Fine Gael deputies Enda Kenny and John Farrelly called for a re-opening of the Spike Island detention centre (formerly a British fortress prison) in Cork Harbour, specifically for young joyriders and for the re-introduction of flogging as a measure of deterrence:

'Perhaps the thought of an enforced stay on Ireland's Alcatraz, minus the comforts of our present prisons and coupled with the thought of possible sentencing by a justice to the indignity of flogging might well deter would-be perpetrators of crime on their helpless victims from their cowardly and vicious crimes' (Coghlan, 1985: 6).

These short-sighted and populist suggestions for superficial solutions to a problem that was almost exclusively related to young men from disadvantaged and under-resourced areas indicated a lack of understanding of the wider contexts in which this particular youth subculture was operating.

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<sup>2</sup> The terminology *Garda Youth Diversion Projects* has only been adopted in the 2003 Project Guidelines (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Reports such as the 1970 *Kennedy Report on Reformatories and Industrial Schools* (Government of Ireland, 1970) and the 1974 *Henchy Report of the Interdepartmental Group on Mentally Ill and Maladjusted Person* (Government of Ireland, 1974), highlighted the need of systematically dealing with young offenders in the community and called for the provision of community-based resources for the treatment of young offenders.

At the same time, the early 1990s saw the emergence of a consensus on the idea of youth crime prevention. This was evidenced by several reports and inter-ministerial task forces dealing with the issue of youth crime specifically and crime prevention more generally, eventually leading to the establishment of the National Crime Council in 1999. The Report of the Select Committee on Crime, entitled *Juvenile Crime-Its Causes and Remedies* for example, was published in 1992, the same year as Ireland became a signatory to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Its proposals eventually led to the 1996 Children's Bill and later more importantly to the 2001 Children Act. The report did indicate a notable shift in policy dealing with young people in conflict with the law which were slowly but surely implemented over the next ten years. Moreover, the report acknowledged that youth crime was the result of a complex net of underlying factors often associated with social and economic disadvantage. It also made a number of far-reaching suggestions, such as the raising of the minimum age of criminal responsibility from seven to twelve years, the establishment of the Juvenile Diversion Programme on a statutory footing and the development of non-custodial and community based sentencing alternatives for young offenders. Specifically with regards to prevention, the report outlined the importance of a 'multi-faceted response at the level of prevention and intervention to the problem of juvenile crime', which needed to 'involve all relevant sectors whether at the level of the community, the State or society' (Government Select Committee, 1992:38). More specifically it demanded that the relevant state actors would increasingly focus on preventing the 'emergence or recurrence of delinquent behaviour', by funding locally based programmes that would 'embrace elements of youth work, sport, adventure activities, or specialist hobbies' (Government Select Committee, 1992:43). It emphasised that this approach would be most successful, by focusing these 'specifically tailored measures for individuals at risk in order to draw them out of any further trouble' (Government Select Committee, 1992:43).

Although the GYDPs have gradually expanded to a nation-wide basis and have also acquired a more significant profile in national youth justice policy, the origins of the projects have to be understood as a very local response to specific local challenges. The first two *Garda Special Projects*, as they were then called, were established in 1991: the *GRAFT (Give Ronanstown A Future Today)* Project in Ronanstown (North Clondalkin); and the *KEY (Killinarden Engages Youth)* Project in Killinarden (Tallaght). Based on previous cooperation between youth work organisations and the Gardai, the final rationale and urgency to establishing the projects was

provided by specific incidences.<sup>4</sup> The most well-known incident occurred in the Neilstown area of Dublin in November 1991, where the ongoing cat and mouse game between young people and the Gardai in the area culminated in the stoning of a fire engine car by a group of about 30 young people. Other incidences involving groups of young people and the Gardai occurred around the same time in other disadvantaged areas of Dublin, including Ballyfermot, Clonsilla and Tallaght (O'Neill, 1991: 16).

At national level, the 'firebrigade event' led to the setting up of the Inter-departmental Group of Crime and Urban Disorder (also known as the 'Ronanstown Report') in 1992. The report appealed to public concerns over the perceived 'lack of social order' caused by young people (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 1992b:1.1), while acknowledging the multiple challenges that young people in disadvantaged areas were facing more generally. Equally, community residents, as well as representatives of statutory and voluntary agencies involved in the projects from the very start, described the incidences as the outcome of challenges related to the rapid growth of local authority housing and corresponding lack of 'community building'; disproportionately high youth populations; high levels of unemployment and low Garda morale (Bowden and Higgins, 2000). Amongst other things, the Ronanstown Report recommended the continuation of the *GRAFT* project, which had been ongoing for just under a year when the final report was published. There was also an interest on behalf of youth organisations to engage in partnerships related to 'crime prevention', as they saw an '... opportunity to engage in work with a group of young people who were not catered for within existing operation...', but also an opportunity to acquire extra resources (Bowden and Higgins 2000: 22). Gradually, the number of projects increased, as a growing number of informal project groups initiated requests through their respective local Garda units for projects to be financed by the Department of Justice.<sup>5</sup> All 14 projects set up between 1991 and 1998 were in disadvantaged urban areas of Dublin (8) Limerick (2) Cork (3) and Waterford (1) (Bowden and

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<sup>4</sup>In the Ronanstown area for example, *Catholic Youth Care*, a large regional (Dublin-based) voluntary youth work organisation, was approached in June 1990 by the Assistant Commissioner of the Gardai and the Department of Justice to become involved in a joint project together with the Gardai, the Probation Service and the Ronanstown Youth Services (Ireland. Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Typically, proposals or requests for projects were made by an informal project group representing different agencies (depending on each project location) and forwarded through the respective Garda unit to Garda Community Relations who in turn recommended projects for funding to the Department of Justice. Garda Community Relations is the unit of An Garda Síochána responsible for community policing, including programmes such as Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert; Joint Policing Committees; Garda Victim Liaison Office.

Higgins, 2000:13). All projects were further characterised by being located, ‘...in large high density urban areas where there is a combination of a large young population, high unemployment and a lack of basic amenities’ (Owen, 1996).

Given the location of the projects in particular urban contexts, their origins cannot be seen as the result of a nationwide ‘grand plan’ or a systematic review of needs of young people in trouble with the law, but very much as a local response to specific local challenges (i.e. the ‘fire brigade’ event). Previously ongoing activities offered by different agencies for young people were now formalised through the setting up of the first two Garda Special Projects. Bowden and Higgins argued that the projects were created with the aim of ‘...maintaining order and developing the means for informal social control, rather than about responding with actions aimed at reducing the crime rate per se...’ (Bowden and Higgins, 2000:22). Their observation was based on the fact that crime rates in both areas were not exceptionally high compared to many other similar areas nationwide, but that there were particular concerns on all sides ‘...in relation to seeming breakdown of order in disadvantaged areas...’ (Bowden and Higgins, 2000:21).

It is also important to point out that at the time of the establishment of the GYDPs, the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme (then Juvenile Liaison Officer-JLO Scheme) was already in operation since 1963, when it was initially set up only in Dublin. The programme introduced a diversionary system of cautioning young people for offences rather than dealing with them through prosecutions in the courts. As a consequence, young people who received a formal caution could be supervised in the community by specially trained Garda Officers, known as Juvenile Liaison Officers, for a period up to 12 months. In 1981 the Programme was expanded nationwide and in 1991 the Garda National Juvenile Office was established with the task to monitor and co-ordinate the implementation of the scheme, as well as to train Juvenile Liaison Officers.

Although the Juvenile Diversion Programme had been in operation for the best part of three decades when the GYDPs were set up, the GYDPs were despite the similarity of names, initially not designed explicitly as a corollary to the Diversion Programme. Their objectives were defined in much broader terms, including such general activities such as awareness raising activities in local schools and the inclusion of objectives such as making ‘a contribution to the quality of life for young people within the target areas’. In this sense, the link between the

GYDPs and the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme was relatively weak from the outset. Though the relationship was increasingly strengthened over time through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), it is important to consider the two interventions as distinct activities, especially when looking at their origins.

## **Phase 2: Here to stay - expansion and consolidation (1999-2004)**

The second period from 1999-2004 saw the projects' rapid expansion in terms of numbers and geographical distribution. While the number of projects had grown steadily between 1991 and 1998, their numbers increased sharply from 1999 onwards. In 1999, projects more than doubled to 29 projects and then rose to 51 projects in 2000. Correspondingly, the total budget allocated to the projects increased from the initially €55,000 in 1991 to nearly €1.3 million in 1999 and to over €1.7 million in 2000 (see Appendix 3). Projects also moved from being solely located in disadvantaged urban areas to rural and other semi-urban areas, such as Killarney (Kerry); Ballincollig (Cork); Bray (Co. Wicklow); or Ballinasloe (Galway).

While there was increased financial investment in social services in general during the 'Celtic Tiger' years and access to ESF funds<sup>6</sup> was instrumental in facilitating this sudden hike in project numbers and funds, it also seems that the projects had come to be seen as part of the local social policy fabric. A review of Dail Debates during this period shows that an increasing number of TDs approached the respective Minister of Justice from the late 1990s onwards, requesting information on why projects in their respective areas were not funded, when they would be funded and they sought details on the financing of second workers.<sup>7</sup> This reflects a broader trend of Irish politics where local politics is played out heavily at national level.

The consolidation of projects is also evident when considering their inclusion in the National Development Plan (2000-2006), where they constituted an element of the 'social inclusion'

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<sup>6</sup> The European Social Fund constitutes one of the two major structural funds of the European Union and aims to '...help prevent and fight unemployment; to make Europe's workforce and companies better equipped to face new challenges and to prevent people losing touch with the labour market through investment in education, skills and employment support...'. It was established by the Treaty of Rome in 1956 and being the longest established structural fund and constitutes the EU's main instrument to contribute to employment growth and opportunities in EU member states. In Ireland, the designated authority for at the Department of Education and Skills and since Ireland's accession to the EU in 1973 and estimated 6 billion Euro have been invested in employment creation, skills training and educational provision (European Social Fund in Ireland, 2007-2013).

<sup>7</sup> I conducted a detailed search and reading of Dail Debates from 1990 onwards which dealt with queries or comments on the Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

chapter, under the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme (Government of Ireland, 2000: 195). The National Development Plan (2000-2006) also made the commitment to significantly expand the number of Garda Special projects. The increasing interest at national level in the projects also become apparent from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs' commissioning of two independent studies in 1998 and 1999 respectively (see Bowden and Higgins 2000 and CSER, 2001). These studies were followed up by the development of the first set of national guidelines, which mainly focused on the operational aspects of the projects (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003). Until then, no interest was shown at national level to take leadership of this intervention.

Nevertheless, when looking more closely at the growth process during this second period, it becomes obvious that the projects' expansion remained largely detached from any kind of strategic or systematic planning process in relation to young people's needs or the wider youth justice system. This is evident from the fact that the decision to support and significantly expand the number of projects was supported *before* any systematic review of the projects had been undertaken.<sup>8</sup> The same was repeated again through the commitment made in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 to expand project numbers to 130 and also in the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*, which envisaged the growth of projects to 130 by 2010 and 168 to 2012.<sup>9</sup> These commitments were again made before the next significant review of projects - the *Baseline analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) - was actually undertaken. This is interesting insofar as it contradicts the otherwise dominant youth crime prevention policy and GYDP discourse of 'evidence-based' interventions (see chapter 5).

This period of expansion and consolidation of the GYDPs from the late 1990s onwards then has to also be seen in a wider context. After decades of calls for and stalled attempts of reform, the Children Act 2001 has been credited for introducing a modern Irish youth justice system, built around the principles of the best interest of the child and detention as the last resort (see e.g. Quinn 2005). In practical terms, the new legislation resulted in the raising of the age of criminal responsibility from seven to twelve years for the majority of offences, a separation of care and justice systems, an increased focus on parental responsibility, the introduction of

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<sup>8</sup> The projects' doubling of numbers and budgets between 1998 and 1999 occurred while the evaluation study was still ongoing (Bowden and Higgins, 2000). Also, the commitment made in the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Ireland. Government of Ireland, 2000) happened before either of the two studies were finalised.

<sup>9</sup> At the time of the writing of the Strategy, 100 projects were in existence and the Strategy also envisaged their growth to 130 projects by 2010 and to 168 by 2012 (IYJS, 2008a: 27). This growth process was subsequently halted- due to financial constraints caused by the recession.



three types of conferencing and the introduction of a wide range of community sanctions. Significantly, the Children Act 2001 also put the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme on statutory footing which has since resulted in the expansion and consolidation of the Programme on several levels. Most importantly, the number of Juvenile Liaison Officers, responsible for the execution of the programme, has been increased from 87<sup>10</sup> to 115<sup>11</sup> and in 2003 a Committee<sup>12</sup> was put into place in accordance with Part 4 of the Children Act 2001, to monitor the effectiveness of the programme.

The Children Act also provided for a framework for youth crime prevention in several other ways, albeit with a focus on secondary prevention<sup>13</sup>. It provided mechanisms for criminal justice agencies (i.e. the Garda Síochána and the Children Court), and obliged the HSE to provide support for the child. It shifted the emphasis of state provision for individual children from a justice to a welfare based approach, acknowledging the multiple needs of children, which led to the contact with the Gardai or the Children Court in the first place. Additionally, by providing different diversionary options for An Garda Síochána through the Diversion Programme - as well as different conferencing schemes for An Garda Síochána, the HSE and the Probation Service - prevention of re-offending is prioritised. Within the scope of the Children Act 2001, prevention has therefore become understood not as primary prevention<sup>14</sup>, but is aimed at children who are either in trouble with the law or come to the notice of welfare agencies.

Lastly, youth crime prevention also formed a fundamental element of broader public policy concerns around crime, throughout this second period under discussion. This was reflected in the National Crime Council's efforts to prepare a Crime Prevention Strategy in 2003. Notably, the process was initiated with a view to offering a strategic overview and suggestions for

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<sup>10</sup> 87 Juvenile Liaison officers and an additional 8 sergeants were as of 2004 responsible for the administration of the Garda Diversion Programme (National Juvenile Office, An Garda Síochána, 2004:28).

<sup>11</sup> 115 Juvenile Liaison officers and an additional 8 sergeants are as of 2010 responsible for the administration of the Garda Diversion Programme (National Juvenile Office, An Garda Síochána, An Garda Síochána, 2010:5).

<sup>12</sup> The first Committee was appointed in June 2003 for a four year time period by Minister of State with responsibility for children at the Departments of Health; Justice, Equality and Law Reform; and Education and Science, Brian Lenihan, T.D. Notably membership comprised only members of An Garda Síochána which implies a significant lack of independence of the Committee.

<sup>13</sup> The term 'secondary prevention' is based on the public health analogy and refers to crime prevention activities aimed at those who are deemed to be 'at risk' of committing crime.

<sup>14</sup> The term 'primary prevention' is based on the public health analogy and refers to crime prevention activities which intervene before the actual occurrence of a crime.

reducing offending and enhanced public protection, not necessarily based on evidence of increased crime, but in response to public sentiments, ‘...while the official statistics in the wake of the preparation of the Crime Prevention Strategy by the National Crime Council, showed decreases in the number of crimes recorded, there was a general feeling among the public that the level of crime was increasing’ (NCC, 2003:3). Interestingly, a large proportion of the Crime Prevention Strategy focused on young people. The final document suggested a three-pronged approach to prevention, based on provision of services for young people in need, focusing mainly on youth work; family support and early education and intervention (NCC, 2003:44).

### **Phase 3: The *Agenda of Change*- the Irish Youth Justice Service and project reform (2005- 2011)**

Finally, the third time period from 2005 -2011 constituted the period of the most significant reforms in the history of the GYDPs, as the setting up of the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2005 and the re-location of the projects under its auspices, started to have tangible effects. At the end of 2011 hundred projects were in operation with a total annual budget of nearly 11 million Euros. As of 2011, about a third of the projects (26 out of 100) are located in RAPID areas. 13 different youth work organisations and a number of independent management organisations are responsible for administering the projects (see Appendix 7). Responsibility for the projects was assigned to the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2005. This represented a fundamental shift in terms of centralising the leadership of the projects and moved them from relative obscurity to centre stage of Irish Youth Justice Policy. As will be demonstrated below, the discursive configuration of the projects mirrored the wider youth justice and youth crime prevention discourse, within which it was often presented as the exemplary element of Irish youth justice reform towards greater accountability and effectiveness.

Based on the official commitment to diversion entailed in the Children Act 2001, the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* placed an increased emphasis on the diversion of young people from offending behaviour. It became of such importance, that it was defined as Goal 2 in its high-level strategy statement, namely: ‘To work to reduce offending by diverting young people from offending behaviour’ (IYJS, 2008: 2). The list of programmes designed to contribute to this High Level Goal was spearheaded by the GYDPs, followed by the Diversion

Programme, community sanctions and restorative justice interventions (IYJS, 2008: 12). Notably, the GYDPs were also listed in the first document included in the Appendix to the Strategy and were accorded a prominent role in the Diversion Programme. The latter was described in reference to the Garda Youth Diversion Projects:

‘...In addition to the Garda Youth Diversion Projects, the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme (GJDP) provides an opportunity to divert juvenile offenders from criminal activity...The GJDP employs such strategies and initiatives as formal and informal cautioning, supervision, restorative cautioning and conferencing, community policing and referral to the Garda Youth Diversion Projects (which operate outside the GJDP but in concert with it)’ (IYJS, 2008: 47).

In this way, not only had the projects now taken centre stage in Irish youth justice policy, but they were also more directly linked to the Diversion Programme. More importantly however, the Strategy incorporated three key actions to be undertaken in relation to the projects, which as I argue have contributed to potentially transforming them into an intervention with a different focus than before. First, the Strategy aimed to conduct a study of the projects in order to achieve ‘...more effective use of diversionary measures for children who offend or who are at risk of offending’ (IYS, 2008: 26). This study came to be known as the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b), which paved the way for significant reforms in project governance and practice. Second, the Strategy set out to develop new project guidelines in 2009 with the view to making ‘greater use of diversionary measures relative to other outcomes for children who offend or who are at risk of offending’ (IYS, 2008: 27). Third, the Strategy set out to ‘...promote best practice, including risk assessment and assessment of specialist needs of children in the projects to be achieved through upskilling through a series of seminars to promote best practice in Garda Youth Diversion Projects’ (IYS, 2008: 27). This set of interrelated actions were subsequently entitled an *Agenda for Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) that drew upon a new public management rationale that demanded that since the projects would constitute a ‘significant investment of public funds’ and also needed to show measurable results.

Although it is still early days at this stage for the IYJS, the approach adopted, did not prioritise primary youth crime prevention, rather it focused on the diversion of children from the criminal justice system who have already been in trouble with the law. The NYJS clearly states that ‘the main focus of the Strategy is on children who are in trouble with the law’ (IYS, 2008:

12). The emphasis was not on primary prevention, i.e. preventing offending by young people in the first place, but rather to reduce reoffending and ensuring that young people who are offending are kept out of the criminal justice system. Hence, in terms of interventions the focus of the IYJS is on the Garda Youth Diversion Projects, the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme and programmes under the National Drugs Strategy. This was also clarified again in the most recent IYJS Annual Report 2010, where it is stated that 'one of the key principles of the Strategy is that prevention is better than cure and it is essentially our mandate to deal with children who get into trouble with the law as effectively as possible within the community' (IYJS, 2010:16). Such a description is slightly incoherent in the case of the GYDPs and the National Drugs Strategy, as they are effectively functioning as primary preventive interventions as well.<sup>15</sup> The rationale for this narrow approach is provided through the argument that the underlying 'multiple' causes of youth offending are addressed by the respective government departments '...the Government has invested significantly in providing a range of appropriate programmes and services to tackle educational and social disadvantage and misuse of alcohol and drugs, but the onus is on relevant Departments to keep their measures under review' (IYJS, 2008: 12). The Strategy therefore clearly does not assume responsibility for what could be termed 'wider societal' problems that young offenders might face as it locates this task with other government departments, which is interesting when looking at the evidence presented by children and young people on their main challenges in relation to offending behaviour.<sup>16</sup>

The currently ongoing *White Paper on Crime Process*, launched by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs in 2009, incorporating an element of crime prevention and community safety, again signified the wider importance attributed to crime prevention in public policy. Again, the rationale provided was not necessarily based on increased crime figures: 'the discussion which follows is not based on a particular view of the precise level of crime in Ireland or on the direction of crime trends. It simply takes as its starting point the existence of crime as a cause of harm in our society which directly affects many tens of thousands of people annually' (Ireland. Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2009: 3). What is most interesting is, that the approach to crime prevention adopted in the *White Paper* excluded references to more structural issues and rather focused on the reduction of 'risk' to

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<sup>15</sup> In the case of the GYDPs, the new *Operational Requirements* (IYJS, 2009b) prescribe a '70/30 mix' between diversion/prevention or primary/secondary target group. As explored in chapter 6, project staff do not consider this as always feasible or considered or as the best possible outcome for all young people participating.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. consultation outcomes in preparation of the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* (IYJS, 2008a:7).

prevent crime amongst individuals, particularly children and young people. This was insofar even more notable, as it based its concept paper on the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (2002), which contains strong references to community development etc.

What emerges then are two parallel developments in the area of youth crime prevention. First, the Irish Youth Justice Service follows a rather narrow approach of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention. They acknowledge the socio-economic causes of youth crime, but leave those issues to other agencies. Their focus is on diversion through supporting the GYDPs and reduction of recidivism through facilitating the development of community-based sanctions. Second, young people comprise the main target group of broader crime prevention policy, particularly under the heading of early intervention and prevention of first-time offending. However, both these parallel policy domains share dominant discourses around issues of youth crime prevention and the best possible management thereof, as well as on young people and their offending behaviour.

### **Project objectives and outcomes- an assemblage of rationales**

Throughout their lifetime, the GYDPs have been described and defined through what appears at first sight seemingly similar project objectives. However a closer analysis of official definitions of these objectives is reflective of broader issues relevant to the projects' transformation over the past two decades. First, early definitions of project objectives found in different documents were marked by slight, yet meaningful, discrepancies. For example, the first official record of the projects' five main objectives, were described by the Department of Justice in 1997 in the discussion paper *Tackling Crime*. These were listed as:

- (1) *To prevent crime,*
- (2) *To divert young people from wrong doing*
- (3) *To make a contribution to the quality of life for young people within the target area*
- (4) *To provide positive alternatives for the young people concerned, and*
- (5) *To support Garda - community relations.*

A year later, the list of project objectives included in the Garda Headquarter Circular from September 1998 was slightly different from the version above.

- (1) *Prevent crime through community and multi-agency co-operation and to improve the quality of life within the community.*
- (2) *Divert young people from becoming involved in criminal/anti-social behaviour.*

(3) *Provide suitable activities to facilitate personal development and encourage civic responsibility.*

(4) *Support and improve Garda/community relations (HQ Circular, 1998)* (cited in Bowden and Higgins, 2000: 27).

Notably in this second definition of project objectives, the prevention of crime had been extended to include 'anti-social behaviour'; the contribution to the quality of life for young people within the target area now also included the improvement of the quality of life within the community more broadly; and the provision of activities was more specifically linked to achieve personal development and civic responsibility. While I am not necessarily arguing that these slight discrepancies were intentional or evident of a shift in thinking about the projects, they do signify the informality of the projects' precise role. Similarly, the lack of specifics on detailed programme activities to be conducted under these objectives was in line with the general freedom accorded to the projects during the early phase of the projects' development.

A second observation relevant to the transformation of project objectives becomes apparent when comparing the current official definition of project objectives with previous ones. The current project guidelines define the GYDPs as 'community based, multi-agency youth crime prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people who have been involved in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects' (IYJS, 2009c: 2).

Again, this definition does not look at first sight markedly different from the definition offered in the Guidelines of 2003, before the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was introduced:

Garda Youth Diversion Projects are community based, multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people from becoming involved (or further involved) in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility.' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 1).

Both sets of guidelines are nearly identical with the exception of the inclusion of 'long-term employability' as one of the objectives in the most recent version of project objectives. This is

partly attributable to the demands made by the significant ESF resourcing of the projects and is also reflected in broader Irish youth justice policy<sup>17</sup>, but is not entirely novel: The GSP Directive of 1998 had outlined that ‘improving *the long-term employability prospects of participants*’ would form a core of its aims. Arguably, this emphasis placed on employability of project participants is also related to the wider recognition of the link between unemployment and offending behaviour. It also corresponds with the discourse of the ‘entrepreneurial self’<sup>18</sup> (Kelly, 2006) and the narrow conceptions of citizenship through its emphasis on education and employment as the main route to citizenship, evident more generally in official discourse and also drawn upon heavily by project workers and JLOs.

Another key difference between these two sets of project guidelines which is easily overlooked is the new emphasis on those young people who have already been involved in offending or anti - social behaviour. The previous objectives left this more open to also include those young people who were seen at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour. This shift is indicative of the broader efforts introduced by the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) to narrow the scope and focus of the projects towards linking the projects directly to the Diversion Programme and thus focus increasingly on the ‘primary target group’, i.e. those young people who have already offended.

Finally, yet most significantly, the comparison of current project objectives with previous versions highlights how individual responsibility of young people has gained prominence vis-a-vis the responsibility of other societal actors towards young people. The current definition of project objectives emphasises individual responsibility of young people who through developing their personalities and becoming responsible citizens ought to desist from offending behaviour. Earlier guidelines (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 5) had similarly placed the focus on young people’s responsibility to ‘turn themselves around’: ‘the intended impact of this process is that those who are engaged in this process *develop into responsible and valued citizens* and the intended outcome is that young people

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<sup>17</sup> The focus on young people’s individual responsibility for their offending behaviour was already highlighted in the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*: ‘These challenge offending behaviour and develop children’s skills so they are in a better position to avail of opportunities for education, employment, training, sport, art, music and other activities, as well as providing a structured environment to add stability to a young person’s life’ (IYJS, 2008a: 13).

<sup>18</sup> Kelly (2006) suggests that the ‘youth-at-risk’ phenomenon predominant in different elements of contemporary youth policy, constructs the ‘entrepreneurial self’ as the ideal youthful subject. The ‘entrepreneurial self’ successfully manoeuvres the challenges of neo-liberal societies and takes the responsibility of his/her education and employment.

engaged do not offend and do not progress into the criminal justice system' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 5).

In this case, the guidelines had the effect of individualising young people's responsibility for their offending behaviour and supporting an image of the 'entrepreneurial self' (Kelly, 2006) – the 'reliable and valued' citizen. It also implied that the young person who is participating in the project is initially not yet a responsible and valued citizen. This image of the incomplete young person results in an individualisation of the issue of youth offending, by not including social conditions into the equation. This point becomes even more visible when looking at earlier definitions of project objectives, which still included making 'a contribution to the quality of life for young people within the target area' (Department of Justice, 1997) as a core element. How the locus of change is the individual young person was also echoed by Ilan, who conducted ethnographic field work in his case study of a Garda Youth Diversion Project in inner-city Dublin in the period under discussion:

'Throughout the GYDP system, the state is concerned with ostensibly displaying the trappings of welfare justice as opposed to radically overhauling the manner in which young offenders are dealt with. Welfare justice requires that consideration is given to the social conditions which span youth offending' (Ilan, 2007: 176).

### **From informality to diversion**

The projects were from their early beginnings characterised by a dual focus on both 'general' prevention and 'specific' diversion. In this way they always differentiated between two 'target groups' of project participants: those who had been cautioned under the Diversion Programme and those who were considered 'at risk' of offending. This focus and differentiation between two 'target groups' of young people emerged from the practice and experience of the very first projects, as can be seen from the 1991 submission of the GRAFT project to the Ronanstown report, in which is stated that:

...we would propose to continue this aspect of the work (i.e. the general work), together with the preventative programme....we are convinced of the need to reach young people who seem more likely than others to become involved in criminal activity, at the earliest possible stage, so as to divert them away from what could



otherwise be the very destructive and expensive path of crime' (Department of Justice, 1992b: 39).

Subsequently, the differentiation between these two target groups was formalised, however without any requirements as to who should be prioritised. The 1998 Garda Circular for example outlined the two target groups as follows:

- (a) young people who have offended and are likely to re-offend. Referrals to these programmes should generally be made by Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers, local Gardaí and Probation and Welfare Officers and,
- (b) young people who have not yet offended but because of their lifestyle and vulnerability are considered to be 'at risk'.

The Circular also specified channels through which the referrals of young people should be made. The document noted how 'referrals should generally be made by local Gardaí, the Project Coordinator, advisory or management committee, home-school liaison officers', etc. (Garda Circular, 1998: 3, cited in Bowden and Higgins, 2000: 151).

As a result of the relatively broad scope accorded to projects to focus on both of these target groups, there was little to differentiate these projects initially from what were called 'special projects' which were part of general youth provision and which were set up also in the early 1990s to meet the more 'complex' needs of specific groups of young people. Notably, the larger proportion of project participants was from the secondary target group. This resulted in the criticism raised subsequently by the evaluation study commissioned by the Department of Justice that some projects had been 'laissez-faire, and moreover, do not lay down any requirement for behavioural change as a condition of participation' (Bowden and Higgins, 2000: 150). The evaluation also noted that the 'broad' definition of the secondary target group would allow virtually any young person to participate in the projects. Similarly, the evaluation also noted that projects often lost their focus and ended up providing 'general youth work' to a wide range of young people.

The subsequently formulated guidelines sought to respond to 'net-widening' and lack of focus among other criticisms by creating more clearly defined access routes to the projects. Project participants should thus mainly come from the 'primary target group', and should be further

limited to those young people who were cautioned *and* who were considered 'at risk of remaining within the justice system' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 40). While the guidelines retained the flexibility for projects to include other participants in the projects, it suggested that this should be done only if they were 'useful' to achieving the goal of youth crime prevention amongst the primary target group. However, discretion as to who precisely was considered to be part of the primary target group, was left to the local Referral Assessment Committees, consisting of the Project Coordinator, the JLO as well as other agency members, whose set up was formalised by the guidelines. While the guidelines specifically justified the reason for *not* specifying 'at risk indicators' to define primary and secondary project participants, referring to the contested nature as to 'what constitutes risk', they ultimately suggested a risk-based 'check-list' for deciding on young people's participation in the projects (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 7, 40 and 49). However, these efforts to direct the projects from their informal beginnings towards working more selectively with particular young people were without real results. Research has shown that they were only loosely followed. As of 2009, the majority of project participants could still be described as what had now become described as the 'secondary target group' (Powell et al., 2010).

A core element of the *Agenda for Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was therefore to address this issue of who is to participate in the projects. This was done in several ways. First, the definition of the primary target group was clarified referring to those young people 'who have entered the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme and/or are considered at risk of remaining within the justice system' (Garda Youth Diversion Projects Operational Requirements, 2010: 17). Second, the selection of the secondary target group was discouraged more explicitly with reference to research: '...all research in this area clearly indicates that the majority of children will grow out of crime irrespective of any intervention. In this respect a project should give particular attention to who this target group is and why the intervention is necessary' (IYJS, 2010c:7). Third, the new guidelines now prescribe a balance to be struck by projects between primary and secondary target group participants: 60-70% of participants should now be directly referred through the Diversion Programme, i.e. belong to the group of primary participants. Finally, the referral process has also become more formalised through the introduction of a standard referral procedure. While this process was already foreseen in the previous guidelines, the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) also introduced the use of a risk assessment tool, the 'Youth Level Service/Case Management Inventory- Screening Version' (YLS/CMI-SV).

The YLS/CMI-SV has been introduced ‘...to be used by the Referral Committee when assessing prospective participants and for tracking progress’ (Garda Youth Diversion Projects Operational Requirements, 2010: 14-15). Initially it was piloted only in 5 project sites, however at the time of writing it was being rolled out across all the projects. As I argue below, this puts a fundamentally different spin on the projects by moving the focus towards assessing risk rather than needs where participants are concerned.

### **Working with young people- from youth work to youth justice work**

With the limited materials available, it is difficult to gain insight into the type of project activities during this early life of the projects. Newspaper reports of the GRAFT project for example, reported that early activities included awareness-raising on the impacts of vandalism; social and environmental programmes for young people and family members, as well as social events, including recreational activities like road races (O’Morain, 1995:9). The evaluation of the first fourteen projects established between 1991 and 1998 concluded that work with young people ongoing in projects very much resembled youth work in terms of activities undertaken. What emerged was a scenario where considerable flexibility was accorded to each project to design and define activities according to specific demands perceived by project workers. Bowden and Higgins (2001) identified that the project agenda was then mostly influenced by the responsible parent organisation, resulting in a different mix of diversion routes and personal development activities. However, the evaluation also suggested that the majority of activities undertaken as part of the projects focused on ‘personal development’, combining leisure or arts activities with planned group or individual interventions (Bowden and Higgins, 2000:49). Very much in line with the individualised objectives of the projects more generally, the underlying assumption was that skills acquisition by young people was the key to modifying the problematical behaviour. However, social education on the other hand, the second key defining parameter of youth work, was only minimally present (Bowden and Higgins, 2000: 50).

The first set of guidelines then sought to address this broad approach adopted by the majority of projects by outlining how youth *justice* work was different from youth work. The guidelines stated that ‘...good youth crime prevention practice, according to the broad literature, must be evidence based. That is, it should draw on a range of practices, resources and techniques that have a demonstrable and measurable result in preventing either the onset of offending or re-

offending' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 5). Arguably, this was a first significant step towards distinguishing the work of the projects from traditional youth work practice. The emphasis here was placed on directing projects towards planning and making more explicit their specific contributions to reducing offending behaviour. This was to be ensured through adhering to managerialist practices, such as ensuring that each programme, activity and action would have measurable objectives and outcomes, that these would be reviewed on a quarterly basis and that project participants would establish short-term goals for their time with the project (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 46).

Despite these efforts to direct projects towards more focused work with young people, professional discretion around practice issues with young people was still very much left to individual project co-ordinators and their respective employing organisations were left responsible for their training and supervision. Practice had changed insofar as co-ordinators were expected to engage in more exacting reporting procedures, but no further 'alignment' to a central agenda was envisaged. In his ethnographic work of one inner city Dublin Garda Youth Diversion Project, Ilan observed that practices of youth work including informal conversations between project workers and young people were central to project practice and that effective welfare justice was happening in personal relationships, independently from legislation or GYDP guidelines: '...the central task of youth justice work occurs in casual conversation, when clients raise issues that the worker might address and hopefully set in motion a chain of critical thinking within the young person's mind...' (Ilan, 2007: 177). Bowden's findings were slightly more nuanced in this regard, where he had identified that in one of his two-case studies of GYDPs, the '...host youth service became the front end of a system of network governance whereby a criminal justice gaze could be cast over a wider area and over those who had no prior status in the justice system' (Bowden, 2006:18).

In the current set-up, project workers still have plenty of latitude to choose the activities and the ways they engage in these activities with young people. However, the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) has introduced several mechanisms to redirect project workers' practices. Most directly, this has happened through the provision of a set of training modules, based on the principles of behavioural psychology. More specifically, the training modules offered,

included 'motivational interviewing'<sup>19</sup>, with the goal to provide staff with the skills to deal with 'complacency' to engage in projects and behavioural change amongst young people and their parents. Second, staff has been introduced to the principles and ideas of Functional Family Therapy<sup>20</sup> with the view to refer participants' families to Functional Family Therapy Sessions. Third, project staff has also been trained in the concept of pro-social modelling<sup>21</sup>, which is a behavioural technique aimed at introducing new ways of thinking about young people and particular ways of working with them.

Typically, such programmes further individualise and pathologise young people's offending behaviour (Cohen, 1985; Gray 2007; Rose, 2000; Stenson 2001). The choice of these training modules over other alternatives, e.g. on more participatory methods of working with young people also corresponds with the focus of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) on actuarialist techniques and accountability. In chapter 7, I will explore the degree to which these techniques have an impact on the ethos and ways of working with young people participating in the project and evaluate if this raises concerns among some project workers. The provision of these training programmes, coupled with the increased demand on projects to provide detailed local crime analyses and to link their activities to these local youth crime profiles (see below), as well as the networking of projects through an online learning platform which is supervised by the Irish Youth Justice Service, all suggest that the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) is intended to govern project staff and to create a new ethos informing the work of the projects.

### **Management, multi-agency focus and reporting: ensuring alignment**

Rhetorically speaking, the involvement of different agencies in the projects was emphasised from the very beginning. The GRAFT submission of 1991 to the Ronanstown Report for example, highlighted two central issues as dominating the work of the projects: inter-agency

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<sup>19</sup> 'Motivational interviewing' focuses on affecting change 'from within the person' (page 4, handout). Project workers were trained to support individuals in helping themselves to become 'ready, willing and able to do something' (IYJS, 2011d).

<sup>20</sup> FFT was founded in 1972 by psychologist James F. Alexander in the United States. In simplest terms, FFT is based on family systems theory and seeks to 'cognitive behavioural intervention strategies to the ecological formulation of the family disturbance' (ISU, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Pro-social modelling is a term that is borrowed from a set of practices emanating from social work practice with 'involuntary clients' (Trotter, 1999). The training programme sought to encourage project staff to establish positive relationships with their 'clients'- the term for young people used in this context-, to model positive behaviour and reinforce the young person in their efforts towards achieving positive behaviour, while also challenging their 'anti-social behaviour'.

collaboration and co-operation and improvement of local quality of life. Typically, proposals or requests for projects were made by an informal project group representing different agencies (depending on each project location) and forwarded through the respective Garda unit to Garda Community Relations<sup>22</sup>, who in turn recommended projects for funding to the Department of Justice. In reality however, projects were managed largely by youth work organisations or independent management organisations, with formal yet distant involvement of the Gardai.<sup>23</sup> While the Garda Community Relations unit was responsible for the central management for the projects, Bowden and Higgins (2000) noted that this was achieved with minimal interference where project practice or administrative regulations were concerned.<sup>24</sup> Projects were not evaluated or measured against any specific criteria, as the main official communication was limited to rudimentary activity reports and financial reports provided by projects to Garda Community Relations. Respective parent organisations were expected to provide training, guidance, advice and supervision for professional practice, which given the diversity of youth work practice resulted in a great variety of arrangements with regards to these specifics. On a local level, the projects were managed by youth service organisations and advised by multi-agency committees also drawn from the local community or directly by independent multi-agency companies set up specifically for the purpose of running the projects. Although these advisory committees were envisaged to also exercise a managerial and supervisory function in terms of activities and project finances, Bowden and Higgins (2001: 156) identified that in effect, these committees had an exclusively consultative role and that ‘...managerial powers and responsibilities are subdivided between the promoting youth service and the Gardai’.

The first national guidelines sought to introduce, streamline and formalise the ad-hoc and rudimentary administrative processes in several ways, with the overall goal to ensure that projects were established with a specific crime prevention focus and that multi-stakeholder involvement was more genuine from the very start. These guidelines included the introduction of a pre-establishment phase, procedures for project monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>22</sup> Garda Community Relations is the unit of An Garda Síochána responsible for community policing, including programmes such as Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert; Joint Policing Committees; Garda Victim Liaison Office.

<sup>23</sup> The first 14 projects established before 1998 were managed by 5 different youth work organisations, as well as three multi-agency management groups independent of a youth work organisation (Bowden and Higgins, 2000: 36).

<sup>24</sup> Only two official documents provide an account of the scope and intended impact of the projects: Garda Special Project Guidelines of 1992 and A Garda Headquarter Circular from 1998, both issued directly from Garda Community Relations and not publicly available.

However evaluation was left to the discretion of each project, with the right reserved for external evaluation by the Department of Justice (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 79). The guidelines also formalised the setting up of Referral Assessment Committees and Project Advisory Committees in each project. The former was to be made up of the JLO, the project co-ordinator and the Probation and Welfare Co-ordinator with the view to process and monitor young people's access and participation in the projects (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 30). The Project Advisory Committee was to consist of a youth organisation representative, a representative of the Gardai (usually the JLO) and other community members and was to be responsible for 'advising, approving, monitoring and evaluating the project strategy' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2003: 11). The Gardai acted as project treasurers', while the managing youth organisation chaired the meetings. Project co-ordinators were responsible for preparing annual plans, reports etc. for consultation and review by the Committee.

Following the take over of the the project by the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2005 and the introduction of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:610), some significant changes occurred in relation to their administration and management. Project budgets are now directly channelled from the Irish Youth Justice Service to the respective parent (youth) organisation. At the local level, the same structure of a Project Referral Committee and Project Advisory Committee is maintained. However, maybe as a trade-off of the loss of involvement of central Garda management - as well as in line with the increasing link of the projects to the Diversion Programme - the Gardai are now involved to a greater degree. A Garda Superintendent is now chairing the Project Advisory Committee and a member of the Gardai is also chairing the Referral Assessment Committee. Furthermore the guidelines provide for a Garda representative to be represented on interview boards for project coordinator positions etc. Gardai are also more involved through the preparation of specific local youth crime profiles, drawing on statistical information from PULSE data. Project coordinators are responsible for providing secretarial services to committees and for preparing most of the paperwork.

Mirroring the degree to which they are now embedded in a new public management agenda, the projects are now obliged to provide detailed youth crime statistics before they receive funding for a project. The *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) outlined that it was interested 'in 'gauging a project's orientation and *alignment* of activities in relation to local youth crime patterns' (IYJS, 2009b: 12). The presumption here was that some projects were not sufficiently

aligned to youth crime reduction activities in their respective areas. Projects are now obliged to prepare detailed logic statements which demonstrate how the projects seek to contribute to reducing local youth crime. Information provided by specialist analysis within An Garda Síochána on the 'nature' of youth crime in the specific area is to be addressed in each logic statement (IYJS, 2009b: 61). This is central to the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) which outlined that '...the purpose of this exercise is to re-design existing GYDP interventions which will be informed by detailed local crime data provided by specialist analysis within An Garda Síochána' (IYJS, 2009b:60-61). This is a condition for receiving funding (IYJS, 2009b: 60). The assumption here is that the provision of qualitative profiles of youth crime in each locality and an explication of how each GYDP aims to tackle youth crime in their respective area, will 'effectively impact' on rates of youth crime.

Finally, the *Agenda for Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) has also introduced several new elements with regards to monitoring and evaluation of programmes. First, the project guidelines set a very different tone in terms of projects' requirement to adhere to the new guidelines: 'projects will be subject to audits and evaluations from IYJS and/or AGS. Failure to observe these requirements or address identified deficits could lead to the closure of a project' (IYJS, 2009c: 4). Also, monitoring and reporting formats have now been completely overhauled. The Annual Plan Format requires projects to adhere closely to youth crime statistics in the area and design their activities around this reservoir of knowledge. Performance reports have now to be submitted more often (quarterly) as opposed to six monthly and they are now more elaborate with a range of drop-down options in an Excel sheet.

### **The voluntary youth work sector and youth crime prevention**

In the Irish context, youth work has been as diverse in its origins as it is in its present configuration. Historically, youth groups came into existence in Ireland shortly after their inception in Britain. While they were strongly influenced by British concerns, they also took on distinctly Irish agendas, such as nationalism, masculinity, maintaining social order and the policing of sexual activity of the female working classes.<sup>25</sup> Although youth work in Ireland has been put on statutory footing by the Youth Work Act 2001, youth work continues to be 'provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations' (YWA, 2001:3). Thus in its

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<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Powell et al. 2012a, Chapters 3 and 4 about the historical origins of youth work in the Irish context. Also see Hurley, 1992 and 1999 for an overview of the historical origins of youth work in Ireland.



contemporary shape and form, Irish youth work is provided by several large voluntary youth work organisations, very few statutory organisations as well as a wide range of smaller, specialised organisations with their different agendas and goals. Thus, some youth work organisations are for example closely affiliated with religious institutions, while others are based on broader civic values, others again focus their work more on supporting particular groups of young people.<sup>26</sup> The National Youth Council of Ireland for example, the umbrella organisation representing the national voluntary youth work sector in Ireland has 38 member organisations and 7 affiliated organisations. Similarly, fourteen different youth work organisations are currently involved in the delivery of GYDPs (see Appendix 7). Depending on their particular ethos, youth work organisations provide a wide range of different supports to young people, which underline the observation that the youth work sector as a whole has increasingly been ‘responsibilised’ into delivering state-led agendas. Larger youth work organisations would thus tend to provide a variety of supports to young people, including a broad range of activities aimed mostly at personal development at different levels as well as the delivery of specific state-led agendas, such as health or drugs education as well as being involved in specific interventions such as the Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

The predominantly voluntary character of the Irish youth work sector also has to be contextualised within the broader set of efforts of the Irish state to engage community and voluntary organisations in the co-production of social services across a range of policy areas. Arguably this ‘responsibilisation’ of the voluntary and community sector can be seen as a strategy aimed at the ‘rolling back’ of the welfare state. It was facilitated on the one hand through the increasing state funding of voluntary organisations, including the youth work sector from the early 1990s onwards, and on the other hand increasing demands for accountability which also stimulated changes towards professionalisation in the youth work sector- welcomed by different youth work organisations to different degrees (Powell et al., 2012a:113).

A final point which is important to discuss in relation to the voluntary youth work sector, is its bifurcated landscape of mainstream youth work on the one hand, and targeted youth work on the other. Whereas the former describes youth work which is open to any young person and is not dependent on the young person ‘having a prior label attached’ (Davies and Merton, 2009:9), the latter includes programmes or interventions designed for specific groups of young

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<sup>26</sup> For a detailed profile of the Irish youth work sector see e.g. Powell et al., 2010.

people, particularly those considered 'at risk'. In the Irish context, targeted youth work has always commanded more state funding and interest, given its specific focus on areas considered as priority in governmental policy.<sup>27</sup> The involvement of the youth work sector in youth crime prevention initiatives, such as the GYDPs can therefore be seen as an additional dimension of targeted youth work.

Despite the diversity which characterises youth work until today, official definitions of 'youth work' started to emerge with the increasing state involvement in the largely voluntary youth work sector during the 1960s. Initially, these were geared explicitly towards the social and moral development of young people (Jenkinson, 2000; Devlin 2008). An observable shift took place with the publication of the Costello Report of 1985 which 'advocated the social and political education of young people and encouraged young people to be critical participants of the society they belong to' (Jenkinson, 2000: 108). This lack of emphasis on critical social education in favour of focusing on personal development that supports young people to 'fit' into the system, remains an issue of ongoing debate (see below). The most recent official definition of youth work provided for in the Youth Work Act (2001) is arguably a minimalist one, which refers to *some* of the foundational elements of youth work and evades important questions, such as young people's position in society or youth work's role in contributing to social change. Youth work is defined by the Act as '...a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.' Far beyond this official definition, youth work has become characterised by several principles through which youth work organisations and practitioners – both in Ireland and in other contexts- typically seek to differentiate themselves from other social professions who engage with young people.

### **Principles of youth work: young people's individual needs**

First, youth work claims to provide individually tailored responses to young people's individual needs within collective settings of young people. Correspondingly, 'starting from where they're at' and 'going beyond where young people are starting', are two of the frequently cited youth

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<sup>27</sup> The core youth work budget of 2008 for example allocated 21 million Euro to 'Special Projects to Assist Disadvantaged Youth' compared to 16.7 million Euro funding for a combination of various mainstream provisions (Powell et al., 2010: 70).

work mantras (Davies and Merton 2009; Davies 2010; Ingram and Harris, 2005; Jenkinson 2000). Ingram and Harris (2005) for example suggest that 'working with the individual' is one of the defining features of youth work, particularly in contrast with more formal educational settings. They observe that:

'Educational establishments such as schools, colleges and universities offer a fixed curriculum and a system that take the learners through it. Youth work is different, youth work starts where young people are, not from where we would like them to be.... youth workers are different: they base their work on the young people's needs and interests. We use this as a starting point to offer young people learning that is relevant to their lives and appropriate to their age, experience and interest. We offer a tailor made service of individual learning pathways' (Ingram and Harris, 2005:14).

Stemming from this claim that youth work provides informal learning is the understanding that youth work should be 'young person centred' as opposed to being driven by the needs of the agency, the youth worker, or indeed the requirements of funding agencies. Of course these other needs will influence the work carried out with young people but the 'primary focus should be the needs of the young people' (Jenkinson, 2000: 111). Equally, the focus on outcomes is not on pre-determined outcomes but to create opportunities for personal and social development and education in informal settings and through the provision of 'fun' activities.

### **Young people's voluntary and active participation**

Second, young people's voluntary and active participation are two further principles frequently referred to as hallmarks of youth work (Batsleer 2008; Davies, 1996, 2005; Gilchrist 2010; Jeffs and Smith 2009; 2010; OMCYA 2010b; Young 1999). Davies (2005:8) describes the principle of voluntary participation as '...the- defining feature of youth work'. Young people can freely choose when to initiate and when to terminate the relationships with youth workers (Jeffs and Smith, 2010:1). This level of empowerment is often contrasted with young people's participation in other settings, which are more or less obligatory, such as schooling, social work or probation work (Davies, 1996). Finally, the voluntary relationship is also seen to tilt the power balance between youth workers and young people towards a more egalitarian relationship (Davies, 2005:8). Young people hold ownership over activities and projects and

youth workers have to develop activities and programmes in a 'more dialogical way' (Jeffs and Smith 2010:2) with young people and based on their interests. In Ireland, the centrality of young people's voluntary participation in youth work settings has been reasserted in official youth policy - most recently in the Quality and Standards Framework (OMCYA, 2010b). Youth work is defined as '...young person-centred, recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation' (OMCYA, 2010b:20). 'Clear examples of voluntary participation' is one of the indicators which youth work organisations and projects are encouraged to measure their work against.<sup>28</sup>

The other aspect of the 'participation' principle frequently highlighted as one of the strengths of youth work relates to young people's active participation as part of the youth work process (Batsleer 2008; Gilchrist 2010; Jeffs and Smith 2009; Young 1999). The claim made is that youth work provides young people with the opportunity to shape and participate in democratic decision making processes both within and outside the concrete project setting, supporting young people in reaching out into their local and wider communities (Batsleer 2008:142). Young (1999:87) suggests how young people's active participation and shaping of the youth work process has potentially 'radical' potential, as young people's ability to recognise and question power relations is honed:

...in choosing to engage, young people accept the inevitable consequence of having to question not only themselves but their relationships, the structure of their lives and the society in which they live. In doing so, they are brought face-to-face with the structural inequalities and institutionalised oppressions which advantage some groups of people at the expense of other and which tip the balance of power in ways which act to dominate rather than liberate' (Young , 1999:87).

In the Irish context, the 'participation agenda' of children and young people has become an increasing policy concern across different domains, spearheaded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (then OMC/OMCYA) since the early 2000s. However, Kiely (2009:25) suggests that the commitment to young people's participation was already spearheaded by the youth work sector much earlier than this. Nevertheless she concludes

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<sup>28</sup>The following indicators are included to measure these quality standards, including: systematic needs assessment; services responsive to the requirements of young people; young people involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of services; and clear examples of voluntary participation (OMCYA, 2010b).

that ‘...despite some progress, the adjustments in power relations required in the youth service and in wider society to invest the concept of youth participation with real meaning have not happened’(Kiely, 2009:25).

### **The youth work relationship**

The third youth work principle often highlighted is the ‘youth work relationship’, based on acceptance, honesty, trust, respect and reciprocity (Young, 1999). Ingram and Harris (2005:15) for example highlight that ‘youth workers are justifiably proud of offering learning through the caring, equal, relationships that they make with young people’ (Ingram and Harris, 2005:15). The relationship between the youth worker and the young person is regarded as one of the key instruments to reduce the power differential, which is commonly encountered in the majority of settings where adults and young people meet. Davies (2010:3) suggests that the relationship between youth workers and young people has to be committed to ‘...reducing to a minimum not just the usual barriers between adult and young person, but also those that arise because of the power and authority built into that role’. The importance of the relationship between youth workers and young people is also prompted by the approach of informal education commonly referred to as central to the youth work ethos. Batsleer argues ‘because of the informality of the work, the ways in which youth and community workers establish their relationships with young people and adults are much less distinctly distant than the style adopted by other professionals, such as teachers and health workers’ (Batsleer, 2008:101).

### **The associative element of youth work**

Finally, the importance of the ‘associative element’ of youth work manifested through group work and the related opportunity to support young people’s relationships with their wider communities through critical social education, are the final two hallmarks of youth work highlighted here (Bradford 2005; Davies 2005; de St. Croix 2007; Jeffs and Smith 2002; Williamson 2005 and 2010). In his manifesto for youth work, Davies (2005:13) for example defines working with young people’s peer networks as one of the fundamental characteristics of youth work: ‘working with and through the collectivity, making use of the extra human resources and capacity generated by strength in numbers can also produce *collective outcomes*...though not exclusive to youth work, this remains an exceptional position.’ Youth work’s contribution to social change should not be exaggerated (Williamson 2005), however

the 'social education' paradigm, claiming to support young people in changing their life circumstances and their relationships with communities and/or institutions as they choose is a central element of youth work. Bradford (2005:60) highlights how the 'radicalisation' of social education in the 1980s in the British context informed youth work practice. Youth workers became concerned with 'empowering' young people, helping them to develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary to become active participants in society, rather than its passive victims.' Similarly, some commentators suggest that the 'radical' tradition has always been part of youth work (Jeffs, 2002; Smith 2002; Spence 2008). Ultimately, this 'radical' potential seems to be dependent on a wide variety of factors, including the history, tradition, management and organisational ethos of youth work organisations, but also on the role of youth work practitioners which are constrained by these parameters. Batsleer (2008: 101) highlights that '... possibilities exist for practitioners to recognise the contestability of youth work practice and to use their positions to develop alternative directions to 'create a developmental, associative, democratic social education practice' (Batsleer, 2008: 101.) This of course also means that the flipside is possible. Through participation in a youth work project, Cooper (2012) suggests that youth workers have the power to exerting 'symbolic violence' over young people by 'blocking' more radical and empowering approaches to resolving their issues and concerns. In the Irish context it is difficult to establish - due to the lack of research into actual youth work practice- to what extent more 'radical' ideas are evident in the history or contemporary practice of youth work. Observers of the youth work scene, argue that there is not much evidence to suggest that these 'radical' ideas have been applied in the history of Irish youth work (Davies and Gibson, 1967; Devlin, 1989; Hurley, 1992, Jenkinson, 1996/2000; Treacy, 2009). Kiely (2009:12) suggests rather that '...the long standing contribution youth work practice has made and continues to make to inducing social conformity, promoting the status quo and imposing the habits of one class over another tend to be obscured when the 'progressive' value base of youth work is being projected'. Some accounts are available where youth work interventions have actually sought to support young people in affecting social change but these seem to be scattered rather than representing the norm of youth work practice (Leahy and Burgess, 2011; Treacy, 2009).

While the debate reviewed here regarding the principles of youth work is largely academic, research with young people on their views of the benefits of and particularities of youth work confirms some of the particular characteristics of youth work practice. Devlin's and Gunning's study (2009) was aimed amongst other things to identify how young people themselves

perceived the benefits of youth work provision in the Irish context.<sup>29</sup> Young people highlighted for example how they valued their voluntary and active participation in youth groups by having a say about how groups are run. Equally, a core narrative taken up by young people was related to the provision of a safe and 'fun' environment where young people felt that their individual personalities were valued and supported, rather than pre-designed curricula to be followed.

### **The contested role of youth work**

One of the central and unresolved debates within youth work in different national contexts—both in academia as well as in practice relates to the definition and maintenance of youth work's professional identity and boundaries, particularly in the context of an ever increasing harmonisation of services for children and young people. Particularly in the British context, the 'instrumentalisation' of youth work by state agendas concerning the regulation and governance of young people's behaviour in different fields such as sexuality, public health issues such as alcohol and drug education, active citizenship as well as crime prevention, has been debated in considerable detail. Jeffs and Smith (2010:11) for example argue that as a consequence of this instrumentalisation one would, 'commonly find practitioners – with various titles [rather than youth workers] who lay claim to an expertise in working with, on and alongside young people. They are hired by agencies seeking to manage young people's behaviour and to promote 'positive transitions''. The involvement of youth work in agendas set by other agencies is an ongoing debate and Banks writing in 2010 concluded that it was ultimately an ethical question whether youth workers should engage in practices and interventions with young people, which have objectives oriented towards containment, conversion and control. The answer, she suggests depends on 'how youth work is defined, what are thought to be the core values of the work, and how these values are interpreted and implemented' (2010:8).

Youth work in the Irish context has always lent itself in varying degrees to different agendas concerning the regulation and governance of young people's behaviour in different fields (see e.g. Devlin 1989; Kiely and Kennedy 2005). In relation to the more recent shifts, i.e. over the past 10 years, towards increased state funding for 'targeted' rather than mainstream youth work provision, McMahon (2009:111) for example argues that this change in state funding has

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<sup>29</sup> Questionnaires were distributed to 172 young people and 41 young people were involved in focus group discussions across 5 different case study sites (Devlin and Gunning, 2009:54).

resulted in 'a move from 'here is some support to help you do what you do', to 'here is what we [the state] are in the market to buy', and the consequence for youth work is that it is increasingly delivered in 'prepackaged formats'. Kiely suggests that implications of this move in youth work to 'fit Government policy imperatives', makes it more difficult to 'say what is distinctive about the knowledge base and practice of youth work' (Kiely 2009:17).

From what I have presented here, it is clear that the Irish youth work sector's participation in the state agenda of youth crime prevention is neither unique to the GYDPs nor a novel phenomenon. In 1978, a policy position paper prepared by the National Youth Council of Ireland *A Policy for Youth Work Services*, explicitly referred to the particular needs of '...those who are at risk, in trouble or feel alienated from their community' and advocated that the youth work sector should offer 'targeted' services for this group of young people (NYCI, 1978). This agenda was taken up in the 1980 O'Sullivan Report on the *Development of Youth Work Services* which featured a section on 'Young People in Trouble with the Law'. This report outlined the contribution of youth work in this area and proposed that '...stronger links need to be forged between voluntary youth leaders and the local Garda Station to improve outcomes for young people' (Department of Education and Science, 1980:59). From the mid 1980s onwards, shortly after the Costello Report<sup>30</sup> was published in 1984 (National Youth Policy Committee, 1984) youth work funding under the National Lottery Fund was introduced, releasing funds which were used for targeting 'disadvantaged areas'. By 1995 almost half of the annual youth work budget was being spent on special projects to assist disadvantaged youth (Department of Education and Science, 1995). The 2009 Youth Work budget allocated over 50% of funding to exclusively 'Special Projects for Youth' which focus on a relatively small target group compared to mainstream youthwork (NYCI, 2009). As stated in the first Evaluation Report of the Diversion projects in 2000 (Bowden and Higgins, 2000) the motivation of youth organisations to become involved in the Garda Youth Diversion Projects seems to be at least partly explained by professional self-interest to expand the organisation and reach more young people who could not be provided with services otherwise. The political landscape which puts significant emphasis on specialised youth work provision, which is supposedly more outcome oriented as opposed to mainstream youth work, obviously puts pressures on youth work organisations to expand their work to areas where funding is available.

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<sup>30</sup> The so called Costello Report received widespread endorsement of the voluntary youth work sector and is until today defined as one of the cornerstones of Irish youth work policy.



Against the background of above outlined youth work principles, the participation of the youth work sector in the GYDPs raises particular questions. For example, the official emphasis of GYDPs to reduce offending behaviour as a pre-determined outcome, rather than basing outcomes on young people's needs and interests would be contrary to a traditional youth work ethos. Gilchrist characterises this debate as an 'enduring friction' (Gilchrist, 2010:76). She argues that the delivery of materials in youth work settings aimed at reducing all types of unwanted behaviours, '...reflects a shift away from informal towards formal education and erodes the time and space that can be devoted to negotiated activities and self-education' (Gilchrist, 2010:76). This process is also observed by Kiely (2009:19) in the Irish context who argues that '...in recent years, strident moves towards programme-based work and curriculum-based practice in Irish youth work seems to be at odds with the dialogue and negotiation that a person-centred approach might entail...'. Equally contentious would be the issue of the 'youth work relationship' in a setting such as the GYDPs. Addressing comparable contexts, Bradford (2005:64) argues that the relationship in traditional youth work served 'expressive' functions, i.e. 'emphasising the possibility of emotional engagement, seeing the personal relationship as a 'good' in itself and offering spaces in which young people can convey and work with their own and others' emotions'. The modernisation of public services in general and corresponding shifts in the expectations from youth work, have moved the emphasis towards instrumental functions: i.e. the relationship serves particular goals, such as the reduction of unwanted behaviour.<sup>31</sup> Equally, Jeffs and Banks (2007:104) question whether the:

...adoption of specific techniques and styles of practice (informal educational methods) can transform crime management or prevention programmes into youth work. If the core purpose of the work ceases to be education, and the values relating to respect, equality of opportunity and participation are lost, then it is doubtful.

Others however would see collaborations such as between youth work organisations and the GYDPs as less contentious. Davies (2010:3) for example argues that a relationship based on trust and mutual respect between young people and youth workers forms the very basis for 'setting boundaries for young people's behaviour or challenging them to stretch themselves beyond their starting points'. Youth work from this perspective is ideally suited to contribute

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<sup>31</sup> Bradford usefully suggests that the 'focus on task performance and pre-occupation with effectiveness and efficiency' (Bradford, 2005: 64) has happened in three particular ways: the assumption that young people are an essentially problematic category; New Labour's preoccupation with 'social exclusion'; and the consistency of managerialism in youth work with the wider audit culture (Bradford, 2005: 65).

to the youth crime prevention agenda. Blacker suggests that the collaboration with 'agendas' is not problematic per se, as long as this is made clear: 'if we enter into relationships with an agenda, then we have a responsibility to communicate this openly' (Blacker, 2010:18).

Research from practice settings does show a mixed picture. France and Wile's evaluation of the Youth Action Scheme (1996) for example showed that youth workers were very much aware of their distinct professional identity and reflected openly about the challenges that the use of other techniques and methods not usually associated with youth work would bring. Jeffs and Banks (2007) on the other hand highlight for example that the demand on workers to prove the link between 'macro-level' policy demands and their daily work 'threatens the educational purpose and approach of their work...They are being asked to state as a core purpose what was once regarded as a desirable by-product. The policy and funding framework is no longer a rather distant set of limits which can be left to managers, but threatens to become intertwined with every day work' (Jeffs and Banks, 2007:104). This was also confirmed by Merton's and Davies' interrogation into 'targeted' youth work (2009:17-18), where youth workers highlighted how they felt that the relationship aspect was coming under pressure from several sides: short-term projects or participation lengths; youth workers involvement in inter-agency settings; the expectation to work with families; and disclosing and sharing of personal information. Similarly, they reported that some youth workers perceived a tension between 'young people-led' versus 'target-led' type of work, to such an extent that the focus of work was pre-determined and 'decided well in advance of any individual young person or group having been met' (Merton and Davies, 2009:16).

## **Conclusion**

When reviewing the projects' development from their early beginnings in 1991, several key changes have occurred: most importantly the projects have moved from relative obscurity to the forefront of Irish national youth justice policy. As the Director Michelle Shannon of the Irish Youth Justice Service stated in her foreword of the *Baseline Analysis*:

Garda Youth Diversion Projects administered by An Garda Síochána and provided by a range of youth organisations occupy a pivotal position in the Youth Justice system. The projects provide us with opportunity to engage young people who are at risk of

developing a pattern of offending and to arrest this behaviour at an early stage (IYJS 2009b: foreword).

The projects now form part of a 'scaled understanding' to youth justice, where a range of interventions is thought of in an incremental way. The Diversion Programme with the minimal degree of intervention; the GYDPs as an additional element for those young people for whom the Diversion Programme on its own is deemed as insufficient; the different programmes offered by the Young Person's Probation for those young people who have entered the criminal justice system; and finally the children detention schools (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009: 1). The projects are thus now more directly linked to the Diversion Programme, shifting the balance of project participants towards those young people cautioned under the Diversion Programme ('primary target group'). They have also been redefined from interventions to improve young people's lives at a broader level towards prioritising their responsibility to directly impact on youth crime rates in local areas. To achieve these changes, the Irish Youth Justice Service has introduced a tighter administration and monitoring of the projects and has also increased efforts to equip project workers with a new skills set to undertake their work.

While all of these changes could be accepted at face value, Chapter 5 shows that these reforms are reflective of the broader discourses deployed in Irish youth crime prevention and youth justice policy and how various technologies are deployed to give effect to these discourses promoted through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The analysis will show how the reforms undertaken as part of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) seek to refocus project workers' interventions with young people in particular ways and also to reaffirm a highly individualised understanding of young people's offending behaviour, increasing the prospect of it resulting in a fundamentally different type of intervention for young people. While both contemporary project discourse and technologies do offer certain continuities compared to previous phases of the projects, it is argued that the current change process does significantly alter this intervention with significant implications for young people's participation in the projects. This also alters some central assumptions associated with project work, which was originally inspired by an ethos most closely associated with youth work than any other mode of practice.

The post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis does not encourage a debate which seeks to dissect 'right' from 'wrong' youth work practice or taking position on the participation

of youth work organisations in the youth crime prevention agenda. Nevertheless, the above discussion delineates some of the issues emerging throughout the analysis of discursive materials. It is important to reiterate again that the post-structuralist interrogation of youth crime prevention undertaken in the context of this thesis claims to challenge *all* truth claims, even seemingly 'progressive ones'. In her post-structuralist analysis of radical social work practice, Healy for example demonstrates how 'activist' social workers, i.e. those who would describe themselves similarly to 'radical' youth workers, often represented their clients' needs as 'analogous to the 'real' needs of the poor' (Healy, 2000:62). She points out that '...this is an unethical and arrogant practice in so far as critical practice perspectives are no more derived from the engagement with 'others' whose interest they are claimed to represent than are the orthodox theories they context' (Healy, 2000:63). In this spirit then, the following analysis will seek to destabilise the binary opposition of 'traditional' versus 'compromised' youth work practice by closely analysing how project workers and JLOs, situated in their specific local contexts, negotiate their positions and draw on selected elements of these binary categories.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The politics of contemporary youth crime prevention: an exploration of central concepts**

#### **Introduction**

Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GDYPs) are best understood as an assemblage of different models and strategies of youth justice, but they draw heavily on elements of what has been described as corporatist youth justice or the 'third model of youth justice' (Pratt, 1989). To conceptualise the emergence, development and contemporary practices of GYDP policy and practice and the broader framework of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy, the different models of youth justice, which provide explanatory frameworks for different approaches to youth justice are elaborated in this chapter. While models such as these tend to oversimplify and sometimes overlook the gaps and fluidity between rhetoric and policies on the one hand and practices on the other, they are useful as heuristic devices to conceptualise the particular emergence, development and shape of the GYDPs. They also facilitate a better understanding of and to a certain extent to impose an order on what is an amalgamation of complicated and eclectic ideas, such as found in the evolution, contemporary shape and daily practices of the GYDPs. A particular emphasis is then placed on critically reviewing some of the core features of corporatist youth justice, as these feature strongly in the governance and practice of the GYDPs. These include, the role and importance accorded to adhering to policies and administrative decision making, mostly based on risk-factor rationales, the 'responsibilisation' of state and voluntary agencies and wider civil society in the task of crime prevention, the increasingly important role of dealing with (potential) young offenders in communities and finally the focus on behaviour modification as the main intervention with those considered 'at risk' of offending. In particular, this chapter also teases in greater detail the role of the risk-factor prevention paradigm which takes on central importance in overall Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy. It is examined with a view to tracing its origins, questioning its dominance and unquestioned truth status as well as the part it plays in obscuring possible alternatives for thinking about young people and their offending behaviour.

In keeping with the post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis, which emphasises rationalities and technologies of government as its framework of analysis, this chapter then moves beyond the corporatist model of youth justice by drawing upon a body of governmentality literature, which highlights how the different features of corporatist youth

justice, can be understood as the expression of particular governmental rationalities and associated technologies of governing perceived social problems and young people in advanced liberal societies. This emphasis of moving beyond the institutional lens of the corporatist youth justice model frames the analysis undertaken in this study, which focuses on identifying governmental rationalities of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy on the one hand and concrete technologies to implement these on the others. This enables the post-structuralist interrogation of seemingly progressive practices such as diversion of young people from the criminal justice system and prevention of offending, undertaken in this thesis.

While the major orientation of this chapter involves a critical engagement with an international body of literature in relation to the themes above, it also considers throughout Irish material relevant to the conceptualisation of Irish youth crime prevention policy, diversion and GDYPs more specifically. While these contributions offer particular strengths, this chapter also aims to highlight how the theoretical, methodological and empirical approach adopted in this thesis can enrich these debates and offer an added perspective to the analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy and the GDYPs, so far not comprehensively explored in the Irish context.

### **Youth crime prevention and models of youth justice: from justice and welfare to corporatism**

Until the end of the 1980s, academic debates seeking to provide theoretical frameworks for conceptualising youth justice were framed within the traditional dichotomy of welfare-based ideas and discourses on the one hand, and criminal-justice ideas/discourses or justice models and practices on the other. Both of these models generally arose out of the observation of concrete developments in youth justice policies in different national settings and sought to integrate explanations of the causes of youth crime, with corresponding objectives to be achieved through designed interventions and implemented by particular professional groups, into comprehensive models.

At its core, the welfare approach to youth justice considers that young people's offending behaviour ultimately stems from issues related to poverty and social disadvantage combined with pathological individual traits which need to be diagnosed and remedied through informal interventions, mainly offered by social workers and other social professions (Pitts, 2003; Pratt; 1989; Smith 2005). In the welfare model of youth justice the overall objective of interventions

is placed on adequately responding to young offenders' individual needs, as well as in its more progressive forms to also offer young people alternatives with a view to advocate for their rights across a broader spectrum beyond the narrow confines of rehabilitation, and including education, health, etc. (Pitts, 2003). Social professions, as opposed to juridical professions, take on a central role in welfare models of youth justice as they support the administration of increasingly informal proceedings dealing with (potential) young offenders. Crucially the justice model's match between administering justice appropriate to the respective offence is in the welfare mode replaced with an emphasis on how needs are met through rehabilitative strategies and how well they are responded to by the young person.

The welfare model of youth justice arguably originated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United Kingdom including Ireland, with the introduction of the 1908 Children Act and included provisions for children and young people to be kept separate from adult criminals at trials and treatment to be provided based on their individual needs (Heywood, 1978). However in practice, the established system of reformatory and industrial schools<sup>1</sup> which fundamentally incarcerated mostly disadvantaged children and those who were deemed as non-conforming to societal standards, was part of an extensive punitive apparatus of dealing with children and young people in general (O'Sullivan and O'Donnell, 2007; Raftery and O'Sullivan, 1999). As a response to this largely punitive regime, the welfare approach to youth justice rose to increasing prominence in England and Wales, as evidenced by the Children And Young Persons Act of 1969 which sought to provide welfarist alternatives for detention. Although not paralleled in Ireland through similar legislative developments, trickles of these debates entered Irish youth justice discourse and practice as signified for example by the popularisation of alternative ideas of dealing with young offenders, such as the introduction of the Diversion Programme in 1963.

However, by the mid- 1970s' the welfare approach to youth justice adopted in England and Wales was publicly and politically seen as an untenable failure based on a variety of arguments, as a 'back to justice' approach slowly took hold , starting with the election of a

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<sup>1</sup> Reformatory and industrial schools were set up in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, including Ireland, with the view to reform both 'deprived and depraved' children in these segregated settings. Although their rehabilitative intent had been heralded at the time of their establishment during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and Ireland as progressive alternatives to harsher forms of punishment history has revealed their inhumane ways of dealing with children and young people (see Arnold, 2009; Ferguson; 2007; Powell et al. 2012; Raftery and O'Sullivan, 1999). After the establishment of the Irish Free State, the system of industrial schools was expanded significantly, in contrast to Britain, where policy shifted away from this system.

conservative government in 1970 (Smith, 2000). Critiques of the welfare approach were also emerging right across the political spectrum. Whereas the political right considered the rise of young people in detention from the mid 1970s onwards as the result of a non-functioning welfare model, which had disregarded formal principles of due process rights etc., the political left suggested that increasing interventions by social workers extended the network of control over young people and were largely arbitrary and went unchecked (Muncie, 2002). However, some commentators suggest that the perceived failures of the welfare model were not due to the failure of this model of youth justice itself, but due to the incoherency of the 'supposedly' welfarist youth justice system which had previously combined justice with welfare principles and practices in an unsystematic way, undermining the potential for a truly welfarist approach to take hold (Muncie, 2004). Bottoms (1974) for example argued that the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969 was never fully implemented. The conservative government which followed between 1970 and 1974 hindered some of the central provisions of the Act, such as mandatory consultation between the police and local authority social service departments, so 'a common view of the appropriate way to deal with children was never developed' (Muncie, 2002:265).

In its pure form, the punitive or criminal justice model of youth justice is based on classical ideas of punishment and adversarial principles, whereas its proponents suggest that it allows for the consideration of children's rights through for example paying attention to due process rights, the right to counsel, accompanying more formal court proceedings. Pratt (1989) aptly describes this shift between the welfare and youth justice approach as a transition from the 'continuum of care' to the 'correctional continuum'. Correspondingly, the role of the social worker, changes from the caring role within the welfare model to taking on the role of gate-keeper and increasingly specialised administrator of reports upon which courts can base their decisions of punishment.

In the Irish context, there arguably coexists a mixed version of both models of youth justice<sup>2</sup>, whereas the Children Act 2001 sought to set up a more welfare orientated youth justice model based on international standards and the statutory support of alternatives such as diversion. However, its slow implementation has been critiqued over the past decade (Kilkelly, 2006;

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<sup>2</sup> Even after the implementation of the Children Act 2001, prosecution is the norm for children who can't be dealt with under the system of Diversion, which is representative of a justice model approach to youth justice. Provisions contained in the Children Act 2001 to administer community sanctions and involve the HSE in addressing unmet needs of young offenders, are some of the elements which signify a more welfarist approach to youth justice .



Seymour, 2004) as undermining its positive potential. In addition, the Criminal Justice Act of 2006 suggested the view that the fundamental justice based model of Irish Youth Justice (Kilkelly, 2006) had not been fully overturned. Thus the Act watered down, the previously increased age of criminal responsibility, by allowing children of 10 and 11 years to be tried for serious offences. As a consequence, the scope of the Juvenile Diversion Programme was also expanded, to allow 10 and 11 year olds to be included in the Programme. Most significantly, the 2006 Criminal Justice Act introduced the widely disputed Anti -Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). While the ASBO is a civil order, breaching it is a criminal offence with a possible custodial sanction as a consequence (Kilkelly, 2009:557). On a broader level, it could be argued that the introduction of ASBO legislation was a strong indicator of the Government's unwillingness to look at the 'youth problem' more thoroughly, rather than tackling it superficially with this 'blunt tool' (Hamilton and Seymour, 2007:86).

Besides apparent incongruities and overlaps between the welfare and justice models of youth justice, it seems reasonable to suggest that both models are more similar than different when looking at the actual aims and outcomes of disposals under both systems. Revisiting the 'welfare versus justice debate', Smith (2006) for example suggested that the aims of changing behaviour and reducing reoffending would unite both approaches. Also, he suggested that interventions which are 'theoretically' positioned in opposing camps might have similarly negative outcomes or unintended consequences. Similarly, in the Irish context, Powell (1995) pointed out that the distinction between welfare and justice paradigms in youth justice was not necessarily significant in terms of policy outcomes. He argued that different ideologies can sometimes support the same set of interventions, sometimes for different reasons. For example care of young offenders in the community can be supported by the political right based on arguments around cost-efficiency as well as the political left based on the argument of detention as last resort.

### **The third model of youth justice: corporatist youth justice**

The description and categorisation of youth justice systems and related interventions along the justice and welfare continuum have been challenged by the development of the 'third model' of youth justice, namely that of corporatist youth justice. As is made apparent throughout this thesis, the development of and several key features of the GYDPs mirror the main elements of the corporatist youth justice model. Pratt (1989) based his observations on

the emergence of the model of corporatism and corporatist policy making in youth justice on the broader ideas developed originally by Unger (1976) in political science in the context of the study of welfare states. Unger argued that corporatist policy making was characterised by centralization of policy, increased government intervention and the cooperation of various professional and other interest groups, with the aim to 'engineer' homogenous aims and objectives and reduce possible conflict amongst different actors in the welfare state.

Pratt (1989) suggested that the prevailing academic consensus of the mid 1980s describing youth justice interventions in England and Wales as having moved from a largely welfarist approach in the 1960s to a punitive and justice based approach by the mid 1980s, were simplistic and overlooked certain trends. He claimed that while the justice approach had dominated youth justice debates in England and Wales from the early 1980s onwards in terms of ideological debates, they remained to a large extent at a rhetorical level. Rather Pratt proposed that several features were significant enough to speak of the emergence of a 'third model' of juvenile justice. In relation to Irish youth crime prevention policy more broadly and the GYDPs more specifically, I suggest that four particular features of the corporatist youth justice model developed by Pratt (1989) are relevant for closer consideration. While these serve only as short descriptors, they will be extensively discussed following some remarks on how an analytical framework which focuses on advanced liberal governmentalities enhances the corporatist youth justice model.

First, the corporatist approach to youth justice highlights how the emphasis of rights or welfare is replaced by an emphasis on efficient implementation of centrally decided and managed priorities. This necessitates a focus on administrative decision making, based on pre-decided risk-factor check-lists, rather than principles of informality or due process as prioritised in punishment or welfare approaches to youth justice. Effective and speedy policy implementation is accorded central importance in the corporatist youth justice policy, hence administrative decision making, based on seemingly 'neutral' tools such as risk-factor check-lists, is developed to support efficient, transparent and comparable decision making at several stages of the youth justice process. In chapter 5 of this thesis for example, it is demonstrated how official youth crime prevention ascribes considerable importance to compliance with effective and evidence-based policy implementation.

Second, with a view to diffusing potential conflicts between different agencies and thus create inefficiencies within the system, interventions with young offenders are as much as possible dealt with outside the formal courtroom, but rather by local teams of different agency representatives (police officers, social workers, youth workers etc.). Agencies beyond the juridical realm are 'responsibilised' in the delivery of youth justice, which at the same time works to refocus their priorities towards crime prevention. The central importance of punishment of already committed crimes or the promotion of the welfare of young offenders, moves towards including a wide range of different actors in preventing future possible crime. Concurrently the emphasis shifts from a rights emphasis towards policy implementation. Paradoxically, the central role played by crime in various inter-agency collaborations, rather than minimising issues of youth offending, results in the 'maximization of delinquency as a crucial social issue, magnified by the production of more flow charts, community profiles, and so on, which become the products of each new inter-agency venture' (Pratt, 1989:250).

Third, offence management is now increasingly located in local communities. Those young people who are not dangerous enough to be locked away, are dealt with in various community settings (such as the GYDPs). Pratt notices importantly, how this signifies a shift in resources away from those young people who merely have welfare needs, reflecting a longstanding concern of the Irish youth work sector: 'so long as the latter remain just a threat to themselves they do not warrant further attention' (Pratt, 1989:247). Similarly, Smith's (2000) observations as to the development of corporatist thinking in British youth justice policy and practice, argued that it emerged in a situation where free market economic policies generated high levels of unemployment, particularly amongst the young, necessitating increased forms of social policing. This also resonates with Bowden's (2006) analysis of the origins of the GYDPs, where he suggests that the setting up of the projects was not primarily concerned with the welfare of young people or the reduction of youth crime rates, but the containment and management of troubled and troublesome young people. Bowden (2006) suggests that the emergence of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects was a response of the state to re-claim public spaces that had been occupied by young people in certain urban areas of Dublin. As such the core rationale of the projects was not primarily concerned with the welfare of young people, but with responding to the perceived potential threat of young people's gathering in public places.

Fourth and closely related to the involvement of a variety of alternative actors in the youth justice system, is what has been described as a 'blurring of boundaries' (Cohen, 1985) taking place at various levels of corporatist youth justice systems (between agencies, between the state and communities, between voluntary agencies and the state). Pratt (1989) suggests that the integration of various agencies and professionals in inter-agency ventures to respond to youth offending serves as a tool to reduce possible conflicts between different entities, now all seen as essential parts to deal with the 'youth crime problem'. As will be discussed in more detail below, this 'blurring of boundaries' has various implications both in terms of professional youth crime prevention and diversion practice as well as implications for broader question related to the governance of youth crime.

Finally, as punishment outside the formal prison system takes on a central role under the corporatist youth justice model, the principle of dealing with young offenders is based not on retribution, but on the principles of behaviour modification. With the view to keep young offenders away from formal institutions, behavioural change is seen as the most efficient way to address their offending behaviour without unduly burdening the administrative system of courts etc. Throughout this thesis, it will become apparent how these features of the corporatist youth justice model are exemplified in the case of the Garda Youth Diversion projects, but also in wider youth crime prevention policy, a development which, as I argue, has been significantly overlooked in the Irish literature on youth crime prevention and Irish youth justice policy more generally.

### **Youth crime prevention and governmentality**

In line with the post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis it is effective to extend the discussion of the corporatist model of youth justice with reference to a body of literature which can conceptualise youth crime prevention and initiatives such as the GYDPs from a governmentality perspective. Both conceptual frameworks of corporatism and governmentality arose in the middle of the 1980s as attempts to grapple with the fundamental changes in governance which had taken place in neo-liberal societies. However, while corporatist policy analysis is anchored in more traditional policy analysis, considering changes in institutions and legislation, the study of governmentality is more concerned with changes of rationalities and technologies of governing. The following section therefore considers how a

governmentality perspective particularly contributes to conceptualising 'prevention' as the manifestation of particularly advanced-liberal logics.

The development of the study of governmentality was closely related to the attempt to understand the increasing influence of neo-liberalism on mainly Western societies from the mid 1980s onwards. Locating their main concerns related to how governing takes place in these contemporary times, Miller and Rose (2007) differentiated between three historically distinct periods of governmentality, each with their particular rationalities and technologies of government.<sup>3</sup> The first period of nineteenth century 'classical liberalism' was characterised through the self-governance of individuals; it was through the demands placed on the state to govern through this type of liberal mentality, that philanthropy was 'supplemented and displaced by the truths produced and disseminated by the positive sciences of economics, statistics, sociology, medicine, biology, psychiatry and psychology' (Miller and Rose, 2007:201). These knowledge fields were accumulated and disseminated by an increasing number of experts and agents of these fields (the scientist, the engineer, the bureaucrat). The individual was subjected by 'means of a kind of individualizing moral normativity' (Miller and Rose, 2007:201). The second period of 'social liberalism', associated with the rise of the welfare state and the institutionalisation of 'governing at a distance' and 'conducting conduct', repositioned the governed subject as a 'subject of needs, attitudes and relationships' (Miller and Rose, 2007:202) who was to be governed through social rule by experts.

Miller and Rose (2007) observed that we have over the last three decades of the twentieth century entered into a phase of 'advanced liberalism'. Developed as a response to the supposed failures of the welfare state in a variety of left and right regimes, 'advanced liberalism' extended ideas of free-market mechanisms to areas such as health, education and crime control (Garland, 2001). Miller and Rose (Miller and Rose, 2007:18), suggested that advanced liberalism '...entailed the deployment of technologies of governing from a centre through powerful means of governing at a distance', which on the one hand resulted in an increased autonomy of entities and persons, but on the other hand introduced new forms of regulation in the shape of technologies such as audits, standards, budgets, risk management, etc. This also led to a new conception of how individual subjects were to be governed: 'that

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that these periods do not refer to epochs as in traditional histories, but are rather to be understood 'as individuating a multiplicity of attempts to rationalize the nature, means, ends, limits for the exercise of power and styles of governing, the instruments, techniques and practices to which they become linked' (Rose, 1999: 27-28).

these would be autonomous and responsible individuals, freely choosing how to behave and act' (Miller and Rose, 2007:18). According to them, 'autonomy' takes on a particular shape in advanced liberalism, where 'autonomy is now represented in terms of personal power and the capacity to accept responsibility- not to blame others but to recognize your own collusion in that which prevents you from being yourself, and in doing so, overcome it and achieve responsible autonomy and personal power' (Rose, 2000:334). This was facilitated through the strategy of 'etho-politics' (Rose, 1999) by 'binding individuals into shared moral norms and values, governing through the self steering forces of honour and shame, propriety, obligation, trust, fidelity, and commitment to others' (Rose, 2000:324). It is within this framework of broader modes of governmentality, that the emphasis placed on behavioural change and self-realisation in corporatist youth justice systems can also be understood.

Most extensively Garland (2001) has applied the governmentality framework to his analysis of Western (mainly UK and US) criminal justice systems. According to him, the broader 'preventive turn', was also reflected specifically in advanced liberal crime prevention regimes. The preventive turn was characterised through three broad themes and strongly reflect Pratt's observations on corporatist youth justice. The first involved the development of 'administrative criminologies', which see crime prospectively rather than retrospectively and in aggregate terms, resulting in 'new criminologies of everyday life' (Garland, 2001:128), accompanied by a reasoning on economic efficiency, value for money, etc. Second, the focus of crime control in advanced liberal societies is placed on inter-agency crime prevention partnerships, where the state cooperates with actors in civil society in the crime prevention project. Crime control becomes everybody's business and extends beyond the traditional remit of criminal justice agencies. And thirdly, the shift from the state to the community as the 'all-purpose solution to every criminal justice problem' (Garland, 2001:123), signifies another core element of the changed qualities of crime control in advanced liberal societies.

### **From diversion to prevention and intervention**

It could be argued that the idea of offering 'diversion' to young people from criminal justice systems, which was the original idea underlying the setting up of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme in 1963, was a step towards integrating justice and welfare models of youth justice. Smith (2006:14) argued that a youth justice system, which moves beyond the dichotomy of 'justice versus welfare' would be based on ideas including 'problem-solving',

‘offence resolution’, ‘diversion’ or ‘restitution’. If implemented ‘perfectly’, a focus on these priorities would result in the tightening of justice systems in terms of what it is authorised to do with young people and simultaneously limit its access to young people, while paying attention to the welfare principle once young people have entered the justice system.

However in practice, diversionary practices across jurisdictions have moved away significantly from the original idea of minimal intervention and of limiting young people’s contact with criminal justice agencies. Diversion alone is deemed to be insufficient to achieve young people’s behaviour modification and is thus increasingly accompanied with more interventionist practices which seek to prevent further or future offending behaviour. They now typically involve a deeper and more extensive engagement with interventionist practices as part of the diversionary processes, as for example involving with GYDPs.

In his discussion of the shifts of diversionary youth justice policies in England and Wales towards more interventionist practices, Goldson (2000) suggested that the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998 ‘put an end to cautioning young people under a diversionary system and established instead, on a statutory basis, the system of Reprimands and Final Warnings’ (Goldson, 2000:37). Thus, the informal process of cautioning has been formalised and obliges police officers to refer young people under the Final Warning to a ‘Youth Offending Team’ (YOT). The 1998 Act established multi-disciplinary Youth Offending Teams, which are coordinated by respective local authorities and overseen by the Youth Justice Board<sup>4</sup>. These multi-disciplinary teams consisting of social workers, youth justice workers, police officers and other professionals then devise a ‘programme of interventions’ which the young person referred to has to submit to, with the possibility of non-compliance being filed in a young person’s criminal record, potentially leading to the up-tariffing<sup>5</sup> of young people’s minor offending behaviour. This brings with it not only challenges in relation to the discretionary power of the police, but also opens up the way of the originally minimalist intervention approach of the diversion system to more interventionist priorities, with all its negative

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<sup>4</sup> The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) is a non-departmental public body created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to oversee the youth justice system for England and Wales, and is funded by the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Department of Education. It has been described in the literature as one of the exemplary feature of a corporatist youth justice system (Crawford, 1991; Smith, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is imaginable that non-attendance or irregular attendance the prescribed programme, coupled with re-offending during participation in the project and as a consequence potential appearance before the court, could lead to tougher sanctions being imposed which an offence if committed otherwise would not warrant

consequences such as labelling and undue criminalisation. Griffin's (2007), Kilkelly's (2011) and Walsh's (2005) critiques of the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme echo these concerns in the Irish context. Kilkelly (2011) suggests that the amendments to the Children Act 2001 in relation to the Diversion Programme, introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2006, significantly alter some of its provisions. Thus the Act now allows evidence as to the involvement in the Programme to be admitted in subsequent proceedings at the sentencing stage. According to Kilkelly (2011:147), this alters 'fundamentally the basis on which the child now enters the Programme which previously offered diversion and a clean slate in return for agreeing to be cautioned and supervised. However, it is also important to extend this critique beyond the Diversion Programme, to the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. The projects are more strongly connected to the Diversion Programme, as I have shown in Chapter 3 and in the context of this research it is important to investigate whether more overt social control practices exist among some projects, such as providing direct feedback on young people's attendance and other issues to JLOs, probation officers, and for the compilation of court reports (see Chapter 5). In this context the importance of putting practices taking place in the GYDPs as such under critical scrutiny is even more significant. Although not yet envisaged in official youth justice policy, this research investigates if and how the incremental steps adopted over the past years in refocusing the GYDPs as a direct support to the Diversion Programme, are slowly but steadily moving the rationale of the GYDPs more closely to the English/Welsh model of the Youth Offending Teams. This will also address whether and how, an additional location is being created where young people are governed and where the logic of prevention and intervention dominates, rather than minimalist diversion.

### **Youth crime prevention and advanced liberal governmentalities**

To conceptualise the pervasiveness of youth crime prevention and its dominance in the contemporary Irish youth justice system, it is useful to consider how the idea of prevention appeared in advanced liberal societies with particular features and as a result of broader governance shifts. Commentators widely agree that the move towards prevention of different kind of 'risks' was related to broader shifts in administering populations, which in turn were enabled through specific rationalities (Donzelot, 1990; Freeman, 1992, 1999; Gilling, 1997; Rose 2000). Early intervention and prevention moved from being based on the principle of 'fecklessness' to the one 'in need'- assessed through an assemblage of technologies under what could be termed 'the insurance principle' as a parameter for justifying who was being



targeted by preventive interventions. This new theory of 'social causation', was according to Gilling (1997) '...built at least as much upon political concern as any scientific analysis, and in the end facilitated the emergence of another strategy of governance or prevention, based upon actuarialism, or the insurance principle' (Gilling, 1997:20).

For Feeley and Simon (1991 and 1994), prevention constituted one of the central features of the 'mentality' (following Foucault) or logic of actuarialist justice, aimed at prevention and risk minimisation. In what they termed the 'new penology', Feeley and Simon (1992) developed a framework which sought to describe how penal strategies have moved from punishing individual offenders towards administering groups of dangerous populations, based on the calculation of aggregate data. These broader shifts, which they observed both in discourses as well as material practices, facilitated according to them the spread of 'actuarialist' techniques, such as those applied in the risk factor prevention paradigm. The underlying logic of governing crime thus shifts: 'Rather than seeking to respond to past offences, these techniques are mainly aimed at preventing future offences...prevention is aimed less at halting proscribed activities than reducing the likelihood and seriousness of offending' (Feeley and Simon 1994:178). This was due to a changed conception of crime in terms of accepting it as an integral part of modern societies and as a response a permanent redevelopment and improvement of associated technologies. Crime prevention thus became a response to this repositioned understanding of the 'nature' of crime. Feeley and Simon's (1994) new penology thesis has been critiqued particularly on empirical grounds which demonstrate that decision making on individual factors and judgements still dominates practices in various penal settings (Bayens et. al, 1998; Mc Corkle and Crank, 1996). Rose's (2000:332) critique is useful to note in this context, as he demonstrates how it might be more appropriate to speak of the predominance of 'risk-thinking' and not necessarily an all-encompassing actuarialism, which tries to attribute numbers and statistics to everything:

'We should not however misunderstand the argument, and assume that the increasing focus upon factors influencing the distribution of behaviours in the population and on strategies for prevention and risk minimization amounts to a totalised shift towards actuarial control (cf Feeley and Simon, 1994). The languages of description and techniques of calculation that are pervading the work of control professions may be probabilistic, but they are seldom actuarial, and are often only weakly numericized.

For the control professionals it is better to understand what is happening in terms of the emergence and routinization of a particular type of thinking: risk thinking.

Rose's observation also explains the observation regarding the lack of penetration of the actuarialist element of the risk-factor paradigm in Irish criminal justice (see Kilcommins et al., 2004). Kilcommins et al. (2004) suggested that probation officers and the parole board maintained their personal judgement and based their decisions mainly on individual interviews with offenders, rather than on prescribed risk-factor formats. Nevertheless, Feeley and Simon's observations usefully reflect on the immanent logic of the prevention paradigm, namely the impossibility to ever achieve 'full control' over unwanted activities, but to reduce their risk of re-occurring, or their intensity.

It is this apparent 'paradox' of prevention, which is crucial to consider, particularly in policy contexts, where central emphasis is based on the production of an 'evidence-base' for the design and implementation of interventions. Freeman (1999) suggested that the project of prevention was in itself designed to re-invent and reinforce itself, which as such presents the paradox of all modern social interventions and social professions. Rather than working towards reducing the necessity of prevention through what are claimed to be 'effective' interventions, the preventive project is always in need of 'more' prevention or an adaptation of prevention techniques, since parts of a complex system of prevention are always destined to fail. Policy making is as a consequence characterised by a 'recursive pattern' (Freeman, 1999:24) seeking to address (partial) system failures and to find solutions to the increased pressures on social systems to handle risks more effectively. Similarly, Gilling (1997) proposed that crime prevention by definition actually attracted an ever-widening pool of crime preventive ideas. He observed that prevention became a parameter so broad and vague during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and the US, that it '...widened the scope for preventive intervention immeasurably' (Gilling, 1997:20). These observations also resonate with more general post-structuralist views on government where the failure of government is part of the immanent logic of governing: 'governmentality may be eternally optimistic, but government is a congenitally failing operation' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 10).

## The preventive turn in criminal justice

In the same vein, particular rationalities or mentalities of government have been described as facilitating and providing the 'preventive' turn in criminal justice. Freeman for example (1999) suggested that modernity enabled the emergence of the prevention paradigm through the development of scientific understandings of cause and effect, resulting in the 'belief' of the possibility of prediction. Also Simon and Feeley (1994) drew attention to the intellectual origins of actuarialist justice in the knowledge fields of 'manufacturing and warfare' and the 'law and economics movement'. Using the example of graphic representation located in these two areas, they effectively illustrated this shift in government rationalities and technologies. With regards to the first, they suggested that symbols representing justice and mercy had been replaced by images of flow charts which now showed how aggregates of populations could be more effectively processed through various stages of the criminal justice process. With regards to the latter, they highlighted how the utilitarian (rather than moral) purpose of economic analysis and focus on performance and quantitative analysis was shared between actuarialist and economic rationalities (Simon and Feeley, 1994:185).

In the British context, the rise of 'prevention' in wider crime control and youth justice policy has been described as a response to the crisis encountered by both the general and youth criminal justice system in the early 1980s (Gilling, 1997). What had become a more welfare-oriented youth justice system in the 1960s (in Britain) was increasingly perceived as having failed to reduce youthful offending and had since the mid 1980s increasingly been shaped into a more punitive system which focused more on a 'deeds rather than needs' based approach of dealing with young offenders (Muncie, 2004). It was in this period that youth crime prevention started to take hold and expanded significantly, for example through the integration of youth crime prevention priorities under the general social inclusion agenda; the targeting and intervention of specific groups of 'at risk' young people and an increasingly punitive range of criminal sanctions for potential and known young offenders (Smith 2007). Crawford (1998) proposed that young people had now become the focus of much social crime prevention, firstly because they (particularly young men) were seen to be committing a large percentage of *recorded*<sup>6</sup> crime and secondly, because the period of 'adolescence' was seen as a stage when criminal careers could still be disrupted by intervention. As a consequence, almost any initiative which could claim to directly or indirectly impact on offending behaviour came to be

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<sup>6</sup> The emphasis added refers to the importance of remembering the social construction of crime and criminalisation

described as 'crime prevention, leading to what commentators argued was the overuse and stretching of an already vague concept (Crawford 1998; Gilling, 1997; White, 2008). In this context, others observed and warned of the 'criminalisation of social policy', where mainstream social policy was inflected with an emphasis on crime prevention (Crawford, 1997; Garland, 2001; Goldson, 1999, 2000, 2002; Kelly, 2003; Kemshall, 2008; Muncie and Hughes, 2002). Social policy hence became subsumed and repositioned as a vehicle to achieve the goals of crime prevention.

In the Irish context, this criminalisation of social policy was for example clearly exemplified in the passing of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provision) Bill in July 1997. The Act authorised local authorities to evict persons who had come to their attention for 'anti-social behaviour'. While it was welcomed by some community activists, it has been heavily criticised for exacerbating the situation of already vulnerable people and research conducted subsequently has shown that this critiques were not exaggerated (Mayock and Moran, 2000). In the field of youth crime prevention, commentators have shown how youth crime prevention has become an increasingly prominent feature of the Irish youth justice system and broader social services provision (see e.g. Kenny, 2000; O'Dwyer, 2002, Quinn, 2002; Seymour 2006). Taken together, these studies of Irish youth crime prevention policy have laid the foundation for conducting an analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy and practice undertaken in this study, by delineating the contours, describing the development mapping different youth crime prevention initiatives. Seymour (2006) for example cites a number of programmes, including the Garda Youth Diversion Projects, which can be described under the umbrella term of youth crime prevention. Quinn (2002) usefully differentiates between approaches to youth crime prevention (i.e. situational, developmental, community and criminal justice) and describes the Garda Youth Diversion Projects under the heading 'individual and group initiatives'. Quinn (2002) also commented critically on the ad hoc development of youth crime prevention policy, the lack of sustained investment and systematic evaluation and also reflected on the more complex research available on risk factors as rationale for programme design. Powell et. al (2012) have suggested that mainstream Irish social policy has over the past decade at least discursively been re-located into the crime prevention framework. For example, the National Crime Council (NCC, 2002) suggested in its consultation document *Tackling the Underlying Causes of Crime- A Partnership Approach*, the setting up of local crime prevention committees which would be included in existing structures of local governance and thus involve all relevant agencies and local communities in the design and implementation of local crime prevention

strategies. The largest part of the consultation document and the ensuing crime prevention strategy, focused on children and young people (National Crime Council, 2003a). Most significantly, the consultation document also suggested the introduction of 'crime-proofing' of all policies and actions designed by government departments and statutory agencies.

The 'preventive turn' (Garland, 2001) in criminal justice systems also has to be contextualised historically so as to dispel the impression that it represents an entirely new phenomenon. Rather, Garland (2001) suggests that the rationalities of prevention have been retuned along advanced liberal lines. For example, the involvement of the 'community' and civil society in crime prevention is often described as characteristic of advanced liberal justice systems (Garland 2001). However, before the establishment of modern police forces and probation services in Western societies, crime prevention was mostly conducted by private citizens and associations of citizens and was only subsequently taken over by the state and professional bodies (Gilling, 1997:71). In this context, the more recent shift towards involving non-state actors, such as communities, civil society organisations and private entities in crime prevention initiatives, has been described as a paradox. Because, when put into a historical context, this move seems to represent a retreat from the very origins of 'modern' crime prevention that had earlier introduced state institutions to deal with crime prevention (Gilling, 1997:71).

The historical perspective in relation to the involvement of communities in criminal justice has in the Irish context most effectively been discussed in relation to policing. Commenting on the relative late formalisation (2005) of community policing in Ireland, Mulcahy (2008) suggested that community involvement had always been a central element of Irish policing since the establishment of An Garda Síochána in 1922. Indeed the informal involvement of communities was central in the project of nation building and it was seen as crucial that citizens could identify with the police both at abstract (national) as well as at their local community level. It was this informalism, which according to Mulcahy (2008) led to the emergence of ad-hoc initiatives such as the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. However, the role of communities in policing and crime prevention was formalised through the Garda Síochána Act 2005 which introduced on a statutory basis the more systematic involvement of communities in policing. This included provisions for mandatory consultations between the police and the public through the establishment of 'joint policing committees', the establishment of a voluntary

Garda Reserve unit, and the extension of the mandate of local authorities in crime control, as a clear example of 'responsibilisation'<sup>7</sup>.

However, despite similarities, it is important to point out that the contemporary involvement of communities, state agencies and civil society organisations in crime prevention is fundamentally different from these pre-modern roots of crime prevention. Today communities and actors in civil society are strategically incorporated as 'partners' under the guidance of the state or a state agency who aligns partners to centrally decided objectives and goals, through a range of new modes of governmentality, including what has been termed a 'responsibilisation strategy'<sup>8</sup> (O'Malley, 1992) or 'membershopping'<sup>9</sup> (O'Sullivan, 2005:59). It is these strategies which have been described as so typical of corporatist policy making in general and corporatist youth justice more specifically.

### **The co-production of a political project**

Given the apparent impossibility of ever achieving completion in preventive efforts, the ever increasing focus on prevention across a range of social services might seem like a paradox. The literature offers a number of observations to explain the appeal of the 'prevention paradigm'. Freeman for example (1999) outlined three key factors which could explain the interest in the idea of prevention. First, its location in the empiricist/positivist traditions of the social sciences would make it suitable for 'rational' and 'well-informed and 'evidence-led' decision making. Second, this characteristic in turn would facilitate 'a high level of rhetorical agreement', expressing the general agreement across systems and the political spectrum in terms of its benefits. Third, an underpinning, derived from arguments based on cost-efficiency strengthens the rhetoric of prevention.

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<sup>7</sup> S 37.1 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 stated that 'A local authority shall, in performing its functions, have regard to the importance of taking steps to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within its area of responsibility'.

<sup>8</sup> 'Responsibilisation' refers to extending responsibility of different tasks of crime control towards non-judicial agencies, communities and civil society and has been described by numerous commentators as a core feature of advanced liberal crime control strategies and extends its reach not only across agencies, but also into civil society and communities (Crawford 1998; Garland, 2001; O'Malley, 1992; Pratt, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> In his analysis of the cultural politics of education in Ireland since the 1950s O'Sullivan (2005) usefully developed the terminology of 'membershopping' to describe the process through which actors are being drawn into dominant policy paradigms. For example, he suggests that staff development at schools facilitates the 'membershopping' of staff members with diverse backgrounds with the dominant policy paradigm (O'Sullivan, 2005:61).

France and Utting's (2005) perspective of viewing the 'paradox' of the impossibility to ever achieve completion in preventive efforts, as the co-production of a major political project between politicians (the state), professionals, social scientists and civil society organisations, is useful as it highlights how different actors participate in reinforcing the prevention paradigm. These different actors are increasingly and in unison turning towards 'evidence-based' interventions that are claimed to achieve better outcomes and that are cost-effective (France and Utting, 2005). However, the discrepancy between the 'high politics' (Freeman, 1999) or 'rationalities' (Miller and Rose 2007) of prevention and the 'low politics' (Freeman, 1999) or 'translation' into technologies (Miller and Rose 2007) is not smooth and coherent and demands ongoing retuning. The 'high politics' of prevention are also used as a rhetorical strategy by policy makers to reassure the public that 'something is being done'. However, the purpose of rhetorically drawing upon the 'high politics' of prevention is not to eliminate the actual problem, but to ensure 'its passage from one social domain to another' (Freeman, 1999:239). The state's particular interest in the 'prevention project, is that it 'affords the opportunity to manage social problems without eliminating them' (Gilling, 1997:15). The state has to demonstrate that it can control social problems and often creates preventive strategies in times of crisis, but also at other times, '...for the commitment to prevention is an uncontrollable addiction' (Gilling, 1997: 15).

At the same time, other actors and participants in the prevention project are also interested in this strategy as it enables them to promote and maintain their 'system boundaries'<sup>10</sup> and to re-assert their respective roles in broader governance structures. For Freeman (1999:238) '...prevention is read as a process by which different systems or agencies communicate ideas of themselves to each other and to other systems such as families and communities, while at the same time negotiating boundaries between them'. However, challenges such as financial constraints and calls for accountability and credibility also put these actors under increasing pressures to continuously re-define their roles and purpose, which is partly done through 'reconnecting with others' (Freeman, 1999:237).

The 'high politics' of crime prevention politics is then implemented through the 'low politics' (Freeman, 1999) of actual governance tools, or what Rose and Miller call technologies of government (Rose and Miller 2007). These technologies are applied selectively in the process of executing prevention practice. Examples would include tools that record, assess and track

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the social professions are interested to maintain their 'system boundaries' as agencies which provide access to service as this is the very life-blood of their profession.

an individual's progress through the preventive landscapes, leading amongst other things to further claims of specialisation amongst the professions, such as for example to the creation of 'youth justice workers' as distinct from youth workers. From this perspective, the social professions are seen to act as the executive arm of the state and ultimately beneficiaries of the prevention agenda. Based on the collection of relevant information and data on their 'subjects', the professions then claim to be able to apply their knowledge and expertise for the benefit of participants. Similar to Freeman's (1999) argument of the 'vicious cycle' of prevention, Gilling argues that prevention is the 'life-blood' of the professions, which is increased by 'promising to be still more preventive, via early intervention' (Gilling, 1997:12). Thus, the paradox of prevention and increasingly earlier intervention particularly in children's and young people's lives can be justified: 'if prevention is a source of legitimacy, but that legitimacy also depends upon the persistence of the problem, then there may well be a natural tendency for the means of professional intervention to gravitate towards tertiary prevention'<sup>11</sup>, (Gilling 1997: 12). The perpetual and increasing interest in prevention both from the state as well as from the social professions can then be understood as a particular mode of government. From this perspective then, 'prevention' offers a rhetorical justification for nearly any intervention and tangibly offers involved actors a way to interact in an increasingly complex landscape of social service provision. The 'prevention' project also draws upon and reconfirms the increasingly popular discourse of 'evidence-based' interventions, implemented through a range of technologies expected to assess and track preventive interventions and their outcomes.

### **The social construction of youth, crime and prevention**

The emergence of youth crime prevention more specifically then can also be understood as an intersection of the social constructs of 'prevention', 'delinquency' and 'youth'. Kett (1979) demonstrated that 'juvenile delinquency' existed as a social and legal category before the rise of adolescence, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century both in Europe and America. The rise of the idea of adolescence, which was arguably 'invented at the same time as the steam engine' (Musgrove, 1964:33), merely led to new views of 'delinquency', particularly through the development of the study of psychology. Indeed, most historians would agree that the idea of 'adolescence' arose out of official concerns about unoccupied young people (predominantly male), arising in the context of industrialization and rapid urbanization (Kett, 1971; Lesko;

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<sup>11</sup> 'Tertiary crime prevention' draws upon public health terminology and refers to crime prevention aimed at discouraging re-offending of those who have already offended.



2001). Formerly involved in agricultural activities and tightly interwoven in family contexts, the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about fundamental changes in work and family structures, affecting particularly young working class boys (Springhall, 1986). This group came to be seen as a potential danger to upper and middle class lifestyles and therefore had to be increasingly contained in settings ranging from schools to youth clubs and also penal institutions.

Both in the UK and Ireland, the Victorian imagery of young people was fuelled by general concerns of urban disorder and crime. In the US context, Lesko (2004) traced the origins of the juvenile justice system and showed how early concerns over 'juvenile delinquency' were manifested through a highly gendered 'technology of self and population making' (Lesko 2004:82). In the UK context, Muncie (2004) showed how concerns related to 'juvenile delinquency' idealised middle-class family norms as ideal and used this increasingly as a rationale to intervene in working class families. He also traced other concepts that are often found in contemporary youth justice, such as the issue of parental responsibility for their children's offending behaviour, to these early roots of youth crime prevention: 'The roots of social disorder were tied directly to the family and the moral life of the poorer classes' (Muncie, 2009:58). Similarly, Rose (1990) argued that the youth crime prevention project in the UK started with the introduction of industrial schools in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, where troublesome children who had failed to undergo 'moralisation' through their parents or the pedagogical apparatus, had to be retrained and their character shaped. According to Rose, schools formed one of the first sites where 'early recognition and treatment' (Rose, 1990: 133) could be facilitated. In this process, new knowledge forms, particularly within psychology, were developed to expand professionals' empires and gradually developed a complex network of 'preventive and therapeutic' child welfare, not only for 'delinquent' children, but also for 'deprived' children. Rose (1990) even goes a step further, arguing that the extension of social regulation of children's lives, amongst other in the development of a separate apparatus dealing with 'juvenile delinquents' did not actually extend their citizenship rights, but disguised the extended network of surveillance over particularly working-class children and their families. Rose describes this extension of technologies of government or what Donzelot termed the 'tutulary complex'<sup>12</sup>, as 'enabling the difficulties posed by working-class families

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<sup>12</sup> In his seminal work *Policing of Families* (1980), Donzelot describes the genealogy of how governing of and through families has become a central feature of contemporary welfare states. When families fail to adhere, through self-regulation and their involvement in a network of institutions and practices, to the expected norms defined by schools, social workers, courts etc., then they are drawn into the 'tutulary complex' of these very institutions. The 'tutulary complex' seeks to rectify, regulate, and supervise these perceived failures through a variety of disciplinary and regulatory technologies.

and children to be acted upon with a degree of force, universality and certainty' (Rose, 1990:129).

The social construction of the concepts of 'youth', 'dangerousness' and 'delinquency' were thus formulated concurrently at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lesko, 2001; Kett, 1979; Musgrove, 1964). It is therefore not surprising that continuities in discourses around offending behaviour and concrete youth crime prevention initiatives can be found. In her analysis of how young people are represented in youth research from the 1960s onwards in the US and Britain, Griffin (1993) for example identified how several dominant discourses related to 'delinquent youth' ran like a thread through decades<sup>13</sup> of thinking about young people and offending behaviour. She identified for example the discourse of 'muscular competition' in which the concepts of 'youth', 'sport', 'leisure', 'delinquency' and 'masculinity' were interwoven into the idea that impulsive energy was a normal by-product of biological development and could be channelled into appropriate activities, such as sports, distracting particularly young boys from offending behaviour. Similarly, she outlines how the discourse of youth and 'disorders of consumption' focused on how young people who, due to lack of information about appropriate behaviours or lack of fulfilment in their leisure time, slipped into consuming illegal substances. Another discourse which she identified was that of 'deficient youth' in relation to education and training. Based on a medical and developmental model of adolescence, this discourse envisioned that young people should be rehabilitated through training schemes, correctional institutions, youth or social work programmes.

Kelly (1999) illustrated the social construction of youthful offending by showing how the concept of 'youth' had historically occupied the 'wild zones' as imagined within the institutional spaces characteristic of modernity. In these 'zones', certain groups of young people had been viewed as being 'ungovernable' and lacking in 'self-regulation'. These representations of 'deviance' and 'ungovernability' have always been fundamentally shaped by race, class and gender, and in relation to what constitutes ideas about 'normal' youth (Kelly 2003: 166). Kelly (2006) had also pointed out contradictions in contemporary discourses of youth crime prevention. He argued that while intervention was often framed within a discourse of care, protection and support, the accompanying utilitarian discourses of social

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<sup>13</sup> Griffin reviews youth research mainly from the UK and the US from the early 1960s to the early 1990s. Despite shifts in the representation of young people and offending behaviour in the discussed periods, she shows the re-occurrence of older discourses, dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, appearing in these bodies of research, despite shifts in the representation of young people and offending behaviour in the discussed period.

cohesion and economic performance, reinforced through the imaginary of young people's 'entrepreneurial self' sat uneasily with the former.

While contemporary youth crime prevention policy is mostly framed as a response to 'real problems' of youthful offending, this body of literature emphasises the broader political rationale underlying youth crime prevention, linking the 'modern' phenomena of 'youth' and 'prevention' into a political project (Armstrong 2006; France, 2007; Kelly, 1999, 2001, 2003;). This would explain why at times when a decline in youth crime can be observed, increasing levels of intervention into the lives of young people, who are seen to be offenders or who have the potential to become future offenders, occurred (see France, 2007)<sup>14</sup>. France's explanation for this phenomenon lies in the application of 'popular punitiveness' in youth policy, where politicians in conjunction with the media attempt to gain electoral support by constructing young people as 'others' and 'outsiders' from whom society needs protection.

### **Youth crime prevention and the governance of marginalised young people**

The conceptualisation of youth crime prevention as a tool of governance becomes particularly pertinent in the Irish context, where a broader body of critical literature has continuously pointed out that Irish Youth Justice System disproportionately focuses on children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Carey, 2001; Ilan, 2010; O'Mahony, 1998; O'Sullivan, 1996, 1997). In his analysis of the construction of the Irish youth justice system, O'Mahony (1998) for example argued that the fundamental logic of the system was based on the subjection of the 'dangerous and perishing classes' to disciplinary surveillance. He suggested that the industrial schools were the first preventive institutions set up in the Irish context: 'children in industrial schools were to be incarcerated in anticipation of future delinquency, but to ensure that future generations would be adequately socialised' (O'Mahony, 1998:90). O'Mahony most importantly links his historical analysis and observations to the current operation of the Irish juvenile justice system, pointing out continuities in an apparently reformed system. Although his observation lacks empirical evidence, his argument is worthwhile reflecting upon:

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<sup>14</sup> France illustrates this at the example of England. In the Irish context, it could be noted that for example the setting up of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects in the early 1990s did not coincide with a rise in national youth offending rates (Bowden and Higgins, 2000).

We are far from the days of the mass confinement of children of the poor in a continuum of carceral sites. We now have community based projects, garda intervention schemes, programmes to educate the young by “Copping on”, partnerships and liaisons of various kinds between parents, social workers and so on. However, although the sites of engagement have moved, the ideology remains intact, as does the logic of where such sites are located and who the subjects of intervention are... In post-Catholic Ireland, the objective of these technologies may not be to restore such children ‘to virtue, to society and to God’ as argued for in 1859, but rather to contain the risk that these children exhibit through technologies of normalisation, socialisation and prevention (O’Mahony 1998:77).

The appearance and concentration of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds across all stages of the youth justice systems also seems to be confirmed by the report on Public Order Offences in Ireland (NCC, 2003). The report showed that police attitudes towards young people differed in respect to different urban areas. Hence young people frequenting the city centre from middle class areas tended to be perceived as ‘young adults with money in their wallets out for a good time’ (NCC, 2003:67). In short, they were more likely to be seen as ‘respectable’ and treated accordingly. This perception in turn influenced the Garda approach to policing. For example, because of their negative assessment of disadvantaged areas, Gardai tended to adopt a more confrontational approach to policing. Similarly, research conducted on the background of young people participating in the GYDPs (CSER, 2001; Powell, et. al 2012) has shown that it is largely young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who participate in the GYDPs. The prevention of future offending, such as dealt with in the framework and daily practice of the GYDPs, can in light of the above literature, be understood specifically as a typical feature of corporatist youth justice and beyond that, as the manifestation of advanced liberal government rationalities and associated technologies to govern particular groups of young people. In the following, section, I focus in more detail on four elements, which strongly feature in the context of the Irish youth crime prevention policy and the GYDPs.

### **Centralisation of leadership and the responsabilisation of partners through inter-agency cooperation and the involvement of communities**

The collaboration of youth work organisations or community based organisations, the Gardai and the Irish Youth Justice Service in the GYDPs has been described as ‘multi-agency’ cooperation in the core definition of the projects (IYJS, 2010:2) and constitutes one of the features of the corporatist youth justice model (Pratt, 1989). In the English context, the ‘Home Office Circular 8/1984’ has been described as the starting point of the promotion of inter-agency cooperation in the youth justice context (Pratt, 1989; Crawford, 1998; Smith, 2000). In line with the corporatist logic of system effectiveness, the rationale presented in the Circular was that cooperation between agencies and sharing of information, was a more efficient and productive way of sharing resources. The mandate of youth crime prevention was thus expanded to a wide range of non-judicial agencies (Pratt, 1989) and the prevention of youth crime became everybody’s business. This process has usefully been described as the ‘responsibilisation’ strategy (Garland, 2001; O’Malley, 1992; Crawford 1998) and extends its reach not only across agencies, but also into civil society and communities.

Across the political spectrum and in different national settings<sup>15</sup>, the state involves its agencies, civil society and communities to participate in the prevention project, in what essentially represents a re-articulation of relations between the state, markets and civil society and follows development in other sectors, such as health, education or welfare (Crawford 1998). In this process, the state’s function changes from ‘rowing’ to ‘steering’ (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). The state now governs from a distance and draws upon this wide range of actors, including ‘communities’ to assist in executing policy priorities. To do this, the state draws not upon principles of command and control, but involves other actors through persuasion, alignment and organisation of partners. Technologies drawn upon during this process of ‘membership’ (O’Sullivan, 2006) are diverse and include consultation, training and piloting. These technologies also activate the self-governing capacities of individuals and communities in participating in the prevention agenda: ‘The targeted populations, through technologies of agency, can be empowered by, or enter into partnership with, professionals, bureaucrats and service providers’ (Dean, 2009: 198). In doing so, the state is beginning to

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<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Shapland (2008) who shows a universal move towards involvement of communities in local crime governance, despite different conceptions of the relationship between ‘the community’ and the criminal justice system in different jurisdictions (e.g. France, German and Netherlands with a strong republican ethos; and UK, Ireland and Canada with a more communitarian understanding of what constitutes ‘community’).

challenge the central assumption of penal modernism, which took for granted that crime control was a specialist task, best concentrated within a differentiated state institution (Garland, 2001). However, Garland (2001) suggested that the motivation behind the 'responsibilisation strategy' was not merely to share responsibility, resources and blame, but that it constituted 'a new conception of how to exercise power in the crime control field, a new form of 'governing-at-a-distance- that introduces principles and techniques of government that are by now quite well established in other areas of social and economic policy' (Garland, 2001:127). Crawford (2001) described the setting up of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, following the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, as signalling shift in local governance patterns in contemporary crime control, characterised by a 'decentring-recentring dialectic'. This denoted a situation where the shift of responsibility for the local delivery of crime control coexists alongside a tighter supervision of policy and practice (through standards, monitoring and evaluation) at the centre/national level. The creation of the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2005 strongly resembles this shift in governance as is closely outlined in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

It is important to consider the significant body of critique which has developed in relation to the 'responsibilisation' of other agencies and communities in criminal justice and youth crime prevention. In his observations and analysis of the strategy of decarceration in the context of the US in the 1980s, Cohen (1979) offered a systematic critique of the seemingly 'benign' use of the 'community' in various crime control strategies. He pointed out that more similarities existed between the initial state control apparatus of delinquency and the new community control apparatus: 'The move to community entails merely more subtle calibrations of care, control, welfare, punishment and treatment. All these wonderful new agencies and programmes are re-processing the same old group of deviants, with a few new ones thrown in' (Cohen, 1979:611). In the process of the move from state to community control, he argued that new forms of knowledge and categories were created: rewards and punishment became 'behavioural contracts' and most damningly, 'community only exists for middle class, white, healthy, middle-aged socially powerful males. The rest have all been classified by them' (Cohen, 1979:611). The 'community' is thus not neutral territory which grants equal access to all, but represents a site of governance, which is based on particular values and parameters that define 'what' or 'who' community is.

This is also echoed by Rose (1996), who suggested that the 'community' should be conceptualised as a new site or 'reconfiguration of territory' in advanced liberal societies. The 'social' has been replaced by the 'community' as a 'new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence, a new plane or surface upon which micro- moral relations among persons are conceptualised and administered' (Miller and Rose, 2007:88). The importance ascribed to the 'community' from this perspective then represents a new form of government, which enables central government to mobilise and instrumentalise active responsibilities of 'communities'. The deployment of a language of community opens up a way of governing communities through naming the 'imagined territory' and through 'specification of the subjects of government' (Rose, 1996:331). The governmentality angle on 'the community' thus extends from being a mere location or entity towards representing a new technology of governing young people.

Associated with this process, is the immanent need to define who is 'inside' and who is 'outside' communities. Sampson (1988) for example suggested that inclusion in community crime prevention initiatives was bound up with agency definitions of the 'respected' and the 'respectable'. This latter point is particularly relevant in the area of youth crime prevention. More often than not, young people while acted upon in the community and through the community are not perceived as part of it. Crawford (1999:158) for example showed through his analysis of British crime prevention policies, how the 'community' was often defined in terms of excluding 'others'. Offenders were often referred to as not belonging to the 'community', creating an imagination of an 'ideology of unity' which is supported by and characteristic of corporatist thinking. The 'community' was prioritized as the higher 'moral order' and disorderly behaviour from young people (or other groups) was seen to violate this very moral order. He observed that already excluded interest groups such as ethnic minorities, young people or the homeless frequently had no voice in partnership/community structures and were thus further excluded. In fact Crawford concluded that this process of exclusion lay in the very nature of community-based crime prevention initiatives and were often justified in terms of a 'normal' and 'necessary' outcome to make partnerships work.

These critical views on discursive deployment of communities in crime prevention and crime control are also echoed by an ethnographic study of two housing estates at the peripheries of two cities in the UK (Hill and Wright, 2003). In Hill and Wright's study, they identified the paradox that while crime itself was being perceived primarily as a 'problem of youth', the

processes of developing community safety strategies operated in such a way as to exclude young people. Thus, they found that young people were targeted in crime prevention strategies devised by the community and 'community safety became a notion to be secured by blaming, isolating and silencing youth' (Hill and Wright, 2003:291). Following their analysis, community safety was predominantly about the local management of crime and incivilities that were seen to be perpetrated by young people, but not about the principles of empowerment and inclusion, which remained at a rhetorical level.

### **For better or for worse: blurring of boundaries and the extension of social control?**

While the emphasis placed on inter-agency cooperation and the increasing involvement of communities in the governance of youth crime undeniably represent a shift in the priorities of how young people are governed, it remains a matter of debate to what extent this is actually beneficial for young people involved in inter-agency ventures.

There is some evidence that inter-agency cooperation is beneficial in settings such as the GYDPs, with those suggesting that inter-agency work, if also not implemented perfectly, can have significant benefits for young people. Smith (2000) suggests that radical critics of the corporatist youth justice agenda, including inter-agency cooperation, such as Pitts and Hope (1997) have for example shown and argued, that youth crime prevention needs to be increasingly embedded in and coordinated with broader social inclusion agendas. Based on this claim, he suggested that critics of inter-agency cooperation contradicted empirical claims which have shown that the lack of co-operation between agencies harms young people (see e.g. Smith, 1999; Loble and Smith, 1999). Similarly Burnett and Appleton (2004) in their in-depth study of the Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team found that inter-agency work facilitated sharing of knowledge within the organisation, easier access to other services and expertise, together with improved referral processes. In their overall evaluation of the Youth Offending Team's work, they argue that the corporatist approach of partnership work had indeed increased the number of services being made available to young people more quickly, providing opportunities for young people that were previously not available. For example, they noted how young people had access to more specialised services (previously supplied in-house, often not by appropriately trained staff, e.g. counselling), which were funded through increased resources made available to Youth Offending Teams on a competitive basis. However, they also observed how this led in some cases to the impression that Youth



Offending Teams became the 'dumping ground' for interventions which other agencies were only happy to transfer.

Others are more critical of the feasibility of implementing inter-agency ventures. In his analysis of local crime prevention partnerships in England and Wales, Hughes (2007) for example argued that 'partnership' or 'community governance' remained a 'lofty ideal', basically because there was a tension between professional and managerial and community interests respectively. For example, he identified across a range of Welsh community crime prevention partnerships that in many instances there were significant and fundamentally unresolvable tensions between the governments' priority to curb anti-social behaviour and local community safety officers, charged with looking after the implementation of local community safety partnerships. An interesting perspective on inter-agency work with children at risk was raised by Nybell (2001) in the U.S. context who conducted an ethnographic study on 'wraparound'<sup>16</sup> services for young people who had come to the attention of teachers or social workers for being 'troublesome'. She found that multi-agency work did not only address multiple risk factors that children faced, but it also was indicative of a shifting understanding of children. She concluded that notions of children as 'complex systems', whose different parts need to be addressed by different actors, could be detected in this approach and that these shaped local practices in a way which had significant and possibly negative consequences for children engaged in such wrap-around services. For example, she observed situations where the participating child was completely overlooked and sidelined in discussions based around what was considered best for the child according to different professionals. She further suggested that while in theory, the conceptualisation of young people's multiple problems from different perspectives being brought to bear might seem empowering, in practice it could often lead to unintended consequences. For example, deliberations amongst team members of the concerned young person's offending behaviour centred on technicalities such as, who will pay for a particular service, who will supervise a particular intervention etc. and was not centred on listening to the young person's self-formulated understanding of his or her offending behaviour. Similarly, she observed that negotiations between different agency representatives took the shape of a 'strategy game', which involved shifting responsibility, but without addressing the young person's core needs. Most worryingly she observed that

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<sup>16</sup> The practice of providing 'wraparound' services has since the early 2000s become the 'state-of the-art' form of service delivery for children and families in the US and is used for those who 'fall through the cracks' or can't be dealt with by normal services (e.g. schools; family support programmes etc.). A team of different professionals focuses on individual children and their families with a view to support them intensively and on an individual risk/needs basis (see Nybell, 2001: 220-222).

multiple interventions offered by different team members, resulted in the young person moving from one isolated position of social exclusion to the next.

At a more conceptual level, the effects of inter-agency collaboration or the involvement in communities in crime control has been termed 'blurring of boundaries', which Cohen (1985) described as a deliberate move of boundaries taking place through for example diversionary programmes. Whereas the prison physically implied clear geographical boundaries in a particular setting concentrating control, offenders can now be dealt with in numerous locations (in youth club like settings or GYDPs for example), as control is increasingly dispersed to more sites. He did not argue that this movement was per-se a negative one, but warned that boundary blurring was not a positive value in itself and could go either way: 'they can easily lead to the most undesirable consequences: violations of civil liberties, unchecked discretion, professional imperialism' (Cohen, 1985: 257). However, he also pointed out possible positive outcomes of this extension of 'social control' if such interventions could 'deploy more resources along those margins, create more opportunities, and provide more services to groups who need them most' (Cohen, 1985:257). Whereas he stated that it would be utopian to expect community projects to systematically contribute to the 'real sources of inequality, exploitation and deprivation' (Cohen, 1985:257), he argued that incidentally, community projects might pick up some of the issues (e.g. alcoholism, learning disability, homelessness etc.) which a positivist approach to punishment would not recognise. Interestingly here, he argued that these side-effects would be achieved by community projects' 'very looseness and vagueness, by the fact that most of them do not actually have the slightest idea what they are doing' (Cohen, 1985:258). Some of the activities and services that Cohen described as being offered to young people in community settings strongly resembles with what is on offer in the GYDPs: 'getting kids on to baseball or football teams, helping them to open a savings account, sending them off to the Boy Scouts or the YMCA, giving out phone numbers of counselling services, sexual advisory clinics, or abortion agencies...' (Cohen, 1985:258).

However, while Cohen also pointed out that participants in projects could subvert the system and utilise it for their own interests, he also mentioned the price that possibly had to be paid for participation in projects: 'Naturally, their clients have to pay a price which their middle-class counterparts do not: instead of being kept out of the system, they are kept in. In exchange for paying the market price you have to submit to labelling, compulsion and

surveillance and you have to put up with diagnostic tests, classification schemes, evaluation research and tedious hours spent answering questions from psychologists' (Cohen, 1985:259). In a landscape that is increasingly interested in efficiency and producing value for money outcomes, his view is surprisingly refreshing, as he underlined that interventions' benefits were not diminished if they didn't tangibly contribute to crime reduction, as they could produce other positive 'side-effects'. Rather he suggested that from a moral viewpoint 'failure of the project to reduce crime is irrelevant' (Cohen, 1985:263), although in strictly utilitarian terms it would present failure. He also argued that while it was politically more appealing to use social control resources as an opportunity for welfare improvement (as opposed to devoting them a priori to welfare policies), he proposed that this political choice was often justified as 'growing up' was very rarely seen as an intrinsic value by itself, but always as a means to achieve successful, active, and law abiding citizens.

Following Cohen, several critics have claimed that the corporatist model has the ability to 'mask' and 'disguise' (Cohen, 1985) the activities of an increasingly punitive youth justice model (Edwards and Hughes, 2002; Loble and Smith, 2007; Pitts and Hope, 1997; Stenson 2005). Pratt (1989:240) argued in the more specific area of youth justice, that juvenile justice was increasingly characterised by a blurring of boundaries between the private and public realm, 'between various criminal justice agencies whose positions and responsibilities become increasingly amorphous in the inter-agency co-operation ventures' (both in punishment and prevention). In the same vein, Smith (2000) viewed the establishment of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales in 1998 as exemplary of this blurring of boundaries between different agencies, which includes those from the voluntary sector, who voluntarily co-opted. He proposed that the extension of powers and resources to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales for commissioning research and making grants to promote good practice facilitated the corporatist agenda, encroaching upon the autonomy of a wide range of previously more 'independent' agencies and bodies.

In the Irish context, critical commentary has been provided both from a legal and a 'social control' perspective on issues relating to diversion from the criminal justice system. However, most of this commentary relates to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme (as opposed to the Garda Diversion Projects) as this programme constitutes the Government's formal strategy of diverting young people from prosecution in the formal criminal justice system. Since the Children Act 2001, this programme was put on a statutory footing and strengthened, most

significantly through the recruitment of additional Juvenile Liaison Officers and the setting up of an Committee in 2003 to monitor the effectiveness of the programme (see chapter 3).

Griffin (2007) for example critically examined the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme, particularly with regards to the role of the Gardai in terms of discretion in the diversionary process and restorative conferencing. He drew on Cohen's (1985) social control perspective, looking amongst other things at the implications with reference to the concept of net widening.<sup>17</sup> Griffin (2007) admitted that it was empirically not possible to find any conclusive proof with regards to the net-widening effect of the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme. Yet he argued that the lack of an explicit policy of limiting the diversion process to deep-end offenders, clearly raised cause for concern in terms of net-widening. A similar point was made by Kilkelly (2008), who highlighted the danger of linking the apparent 'success' of the programme to the sheer numbers of increasing participants over the years<sup>18</sup>. More importantly however, she pointed out the de-facto net-widening of the Programme through the Criminal Justice Act 2006, by extending the programme to children aged 10 and 11 years who have been warned in respect of anti-social behaviour to be referred to the Programme. Finally she also warned of possible negative consequences due to the fact that evidence of a child's involvement in the Diversion Programme is now admissible in subsequent Court Proceedings as a result Sections 123-126 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006.

Griffin also argued that the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme clearly blurred the boundaries between the 'state and community intervention and their respective roles in crime control resulting in the enhancing of the surveillance of the juvenile within the community' (Griffin, 2007: 127). O'Dwyer on the other hand was more confident that the adequate safeguards to limit Gardai discretion in the diversionary and conferencing process were in place and 'that there is nothing inherent in the Garda restorative model that would cause concern' (O Dwyer, 2006:8)<sup>19</sup>. However O'Dwyer seemed to rely on anecdotal evidence to generate his findings. 'It has been observed in practice that, with experience, JLOs will

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<sup>17</sup> By 'net-widening', Cohen (1985) referred to a process through which the network of criminal justice agencies is expanded, most significantly through the involvement of 'at-risk' populations through various crime prevention initiatives or the seemingly benign extension of e.g. community sanctions. If also involved in different forms of prevention or punishment, the result of net-widening means that a larger number of people are under surveillance.

<sup>18</sup> While in 1999, 7,844 young people were included in the Programme, this number had risen to 12,785 in 2004 and to 21,727 in 2007 (An Garda Síochána, Annual Reports). As of 2005, a total of 178,485 children had been included in the Programme since its inception.

<sup>19</sup> At the time of writing, Kieran O'Dwyer was Head of Research at the Garda Research Unit and he bases his argumentation on his experience as an evaluator of the programme.

gravitate towards more difficult cases' (O'Dwyer, 2006: 7). Kilkelly (2011) has described the Diversion Programme as the '...most coherent and effective response to youth offending in Ireland' (Kilkelly, 2011:149). However, she maintains that discretion at various stages of the diversion process remains unchecked and as a consequence the Diversion Programme was not conforming to international best practice in the areas of transparency, accountability and professionalism in juvenile justice.

### **Behavioural containment, circuits of inclusion and exclusion**

As another central element of corporatist youth justice, Pratt (1989) suggested that the emphasis has shifted to a development of penalties that provided a form of behavioural containment, behaviour modification or behaviour surveillance. Similarly, Cohen (1985) had dubbed this the 'new behaviourism': 'As we move further from the hard core of the criminal justice system into the softer community and diversion agencies and then the more-or-less voluntary counselling and therapy business, we find that mind-treatment is intact and expanding massively' (Cohen, 1985:152). He suggested that as opposed to dealing with offenders' or potential offenders' 'inner thoughts', the focus was on changing and monitoring behaviour accompanied by the lack of consideration with regards to wider social reform (Cohen, 1985:148). Cohen's observations on the 'new behaviourism' resonate strongly with the emphasis on programmatic interventions placed in the context of the GYDPs (see Chapters 5 and 8).

Cohen's observations also resonate with what Rose (2000) has termed 'ethical reconstruction' as part of the new politics of control in advanced liberal societies. In this system, the 'perpetrator of crime... is the responsible subject of moral community- guided –or misguided- by ethical self-steering mechanisms' (2000:321). Exclusion has been recast as a fundamentally subjective condition, '...not a psychological subjectivity with social determinants as in welfare regimes' (Rose, 2000:335). This rationality then requires particular technologies to address the problem of the individual (potential) offender: 'This ethical reformulation opens up the possibility for whole range of psychological techniques to be recycled into programmes for governing 'the excluded'' (Rose, 2000: 334). The focus is on the individual subjects' active contribution and choice making to change their moral and ethical choices so as to belong to the community of inclusion. This in itself emerges as a powerful standard by which individual subjects are monitored.

In her critical analysis of the English and Welsh youth justice system, Gray (2007) shows how these principles of 'ethical reconstruction' underlie the rationale of different initiatives. Through reviewing an evaluation of the ASSET<sup>20</sup> risk assessment tools used by Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) for example, she concluded that 'YOT workers rated individual risk factors such as cognitive deficiencies as posing a higher risk to reoffending than the social risks attached to such considerations as school exclusion and unemployment' (Gray, 2007:408). Across the youth justice system, young offenders are positioned as individuals who are responsible for their failures at multiple levels e.g. in education or employment, rather than 'pinpointing broader structural barriers arising from shortcomings in the actual availability and quality of educational resources or job opportunities' (Gray, 2007:409). Equally, Stenson (2001) posited that crime control in advanced liberalism was characterised through moral engineering rather than social engineering. The ensuing interview analysis (see chapter 8) investigates whether this emphasis on working on young people's subjectivity is promoted in the practice of GYDPs and to what degree project workers construct young people's offending behaviour and associated changes in these individualising and sometimes also pathologising terms.

### **The role of the social professions**

The role of social professions, such as social workers and youth workers, can be accorded a central role in explaining the expansion of the corporatist model of youth justice. Gilling (1997) for example interpreted the increased emphasis on better co-ordination with other agencies and services as a way in which professions can seek to extend their preventive orientation. He argued that '...in this way a more holistic package is offered to those who may be experiencing or may be at risk of a problem, the package being sold on the basis of its being more preventive by means of being more effective' (Gilling, 1997:13). In addition, he suggested that the motivation of inter-agency collaboration can be viewed as a 'defense mechanism' for certain professions who have to defend and extend their own position in a volatile social service sector. This resonates with for example the Irish voluntary youth work sector's increasing acceptance of 'targeted' state funding, such as in the case of GYDP funding. This arguably not only provides the sector with added legitimacy as to its importance, but in very concrete terms secures its general service provision as well as its staff.

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<sup>20</sup> ASSET is an assessment tool widely used in the UK context (e.g. on the Youth Offending Teams) to assess young offenders who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Similarly, other observers in the British context proposed that a corporatist youth justice system, was enabled by the interest of the participating social professions (Pratt 1989; Smith, 2000). Particularly the 'professional community of specialist social workers' was viewed as being able to contribute to the achievement of central government's policy objectives and outcomes, often leading to the creation of new professions (specialized youth justice workers for example). As the prime example of this 'practitioner-led corporatism', Smith (2000) cites the Inter-agency juvenile liaison bureau in Northampton.<sup>21</sup> He showed how in this case, the boundaries between participating agencies were increasingly blurred (Cohen, 1985), the autonomy of individual workers limited in the service of wider policy objectives and consensus was assumed between policy objectives and social workers' practices. Practitioners were led by intentions to adhere to policy, rather than rights as their 'central source of guidance for practice' and 'behavioural change replaced punishment as the aim of intervention in cases in which diversion or minimalist intervention was not a practical option' (Smith, 1999:130).

Pratt (1989) also explained how the social work profession with its helping and caring tradition justified its involvement in the corporatist juvenile justice landscape. However, he concluded that the ideology and discourse of social work had not disappeared but was being refurbished, brought up to date, remodelled and then set down in new domains and locations: 'In this way support for these policies can be galvanized and sustained from within social work and traditional oppositions maintained while at the same time ensuring effective alliances with welfare critics and the policy objectives of government' (Pratt, 1989:41).

Similarly Burnett and Appleton found that while all staff members involved in the Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team they studied, were concerned 'to make things better for young people' (Burnett and Appleton, 2004:40), debates between different team members took place particularly with regard to their different views on welfarist and punitive elements of youth justice work. Probation officers involved on the team were keener to follow a case-management approach based on 'evidence-based' practice interventions, whereas youth justice workers (with a social work background) were worried that this might harm the relationship between young offenders and team members. However, they also found that different professionals learnt from each other and merged into new roles in the 'fruits salad mixture of the YOTs' (Burnett and Appleton, 2004:42). They concluded that the 'benevolent'

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<sup>21</sup> The juvenile liaison bureau of Northampton was the third to be set up in England in 1984. It was comprised of teachers, social workers, police officers, youth workers and probation officers, with the aim to divert referred young people from court (Morris and Giller, 1987).

orientation of the social work ethic was not undermined in the projects but survived in the inter-agency constellation.<sup>22</sup>

The picture emerging was more complex in the ethnographic study of a Youth Offending Team (YOT) in the UK conducted by Souhami (2007). In this study, she investigated how different professions, in particular social workers and the police dealt with their professional roles in a multi-agency setting and how boundaries between different agencies were negotiated. For example, she identified that social workers clearly felt that there was an incompatibility between their welfare ethos and the police's social control ethos, as they were attempting to keep young people away from offending and the police personnel were described as being interested in 'criminalising' young people (Souhami, 2007:47). Social workers reported feeling deeply uncomfortable with their dual roles of having to enforce 'social control' and look after young people's welfare. Most social workers described the importance of relationship building with young people, as the core of their activity. However they appreciated that it was difficult to demonstrate the outcomes of their efforts. However, the emphasis placed on reducing offending as the ultimate outcome of their work, differed also amongst social workers. The police officer of the Youth Offending Team in contrast, while describing his core duties as very similar to those of the social workers, did not understand offending behaviour as the expression of need, but as a way of 'testing' behaviour of young offenders towards professionals who were trying to work with them (Souhami, 2007:8). This then had clear impact on the formation of a coherent practice amongst different professionals on the Youth Offending Team, for example how to deal with sensitive issues such as voluntary versus compulsory attendance for young people. Some practitioners, e.g. health and education officers who were part of the Youth Offending Team, did not think it was appropriate that they were required to complete pre-sentence reports etc. which they did not consider to be within their capacity or supportive of their relationship with the young people. It also made them concerned that their discrete professional identities were being increasingly diminished.

The involvement of the youth work sector in state-led agendas like youth crime prevention has also been widely debated in different national contexts. The key and critical question here centres on whether the youth work sector can maintain what it claims as its traditional ethos

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<sup>22</sup> The juvenile liaison bureau of Northampton was the third to be set up in England in 1984. It was comprised of teachers, social workers, police officers, youth workers and probation officers, with the aim to divert referred young people from court (Morris and Giller, 1987).



or core principles<sup>23</sup> or whether this gets compromised through the increasing instrumentalisation of youth work and co-operation in other settings, such as the GYDPs. Writing about the origins of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects and their continued path of development, Bowden (2006) found by looking at two detailed case studies of projects that, one 'host youth service became the front end of a system of network governance whereby a criminal justice gaze could be cast over a wider area and over those who had no prior status in the justice system' (Bowden, 2006:18). In the second case study he observed that project staff did not participate in community policing nor did they respond to public order issues in a way which sought to restrict young people's access to public spaces, rather they developed a practice that centred upon creating dialogue with young people and used this platform to develop relationships.

From his ethnographic study of an inner-city Dublin youth gang and amongst other things their involvement in a Garda Youth Diversion Project, Ilan (2010), similar to O'Mahony (2001), demonstrated a continuity between original youth justice interventions in the Victorian era - concerned with re-moralising deprived and depraved children of working class families - and contemporary interventions in young people's lives, which according to him represented a move away from diversionary and hands-off principles to a more interventionist approach. He concludes that '...behind the laudable and progressive aims of the GYDP's lie 'spectres of class-cultural evangelism' (Ilan, 2010:28). He argues that the reality of 'progressive' and 'liberal' interventions, such as in the form of the GYDPs, in young people's lives is more complex, since responses to socio-cultural inequalities are inevitably always informed by specific cultural understandings of what does and does not constitute appropriate behaviour. On a broader level, Ilan argues that the Irish youth justice system is underpinned by a broad conception of disadvantaged youth as fundamentally in need of behavioural correction. This he argues is a pathology based understanding shared across professional groups involved in the GYDPs: 'Neither vision seems to recognize client youth's own understandings of their behaviour and normativity and their constructions of GYDP attendance' (Ilan, 2010: 29).

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<sup>23</sup> These would typically include: a focus on young people's individual needs, voluntary participation, young people's active participation, building relationships with young people, group work and critical social education (see Jeffs and Smith, 2010; Spence, 2008; Williamson, 2005).

## From rights to actuarialism and risk management

Related to the 'new behaviourism' is what Pratt (1989) has described as a shift from offenders' rights to a focus on policy at all levels of decision-making, ensuring the meeting of centrally negotiated and agreed policy objectives. According to Muncie (2002, 2004) concerns focus on questions of cost-effectiveness and measurable, quantifiable outcomes (the cornerstones of new public management) at the expense of moral questions relating to the purpose and process of youth justice work. This actuarialism (see above Feeley and Simon 1992 and 1994) is less interested in meanings or motives behind offending and replaces these with an emphasis on 'technologies' of 'risk minimisation' and the elimination of potential threats to social order.

To give effect to the actuarialist agenda, the technology of managing through 'risk' is drawn upon in wider criminal justice as well as in youth crime prevention, but also in other areas concerned with managing young people's lives. In the context of youth justice, the ascendancy of the risk factor paradigm has been based on longitudinal studies such as the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development<sup>24</sup> initiated in 1962 in the UK or the Pittsburgh Girl Study<sup>25</sup>, initiated in 1999, in the USA. Much of the continuing work both in academia as well as in policy circles refer back to the risk framework developed by David Farrington, the lead scientist of the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development. In one of his most recent comprehensive publications, Farrington (2008) re-affirmed the basic assumptions of the risk-factor paradigm. He suggested that a number of risk factors at individual, family and environmental levels are identifiable in children from an early age onwards and if recognised and addressed appropriately, could significantly reduce future offending behaviour. The risk factor list includes factors such as low intelligence and attainment, personality and temperament, empathy and impulsiveness on an individual level; criminal or anti-social parents, large family size, poor parental supervision, parental conflict and disrupted families at the family level; and

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<sup>24</sup> The Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development was set up by David West in 1961 and consequently taken over by David Farrington in 1969 and sought to test several hypotheses about delinquent development. Data was collected on 411 boys aged 8-9 in South London and a variety of factors were investigated through the application of different research methods (surveys, interviews, psychological tests). Research participants were consequently followed up by interviews 35 years later. For an overview of findings, see e.g. Farrington (2003).

<sup>25</sup> The Pittsburgh Girl Study was a longitudinal study initiated in 1999, in Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) with the view to gain an evidence base into development of conduct disorders and delinquency, with consideration of a wide range of risk and protective factors. Nearly 2,500 girls, aged between 5-8 at the time of recruitment, their primary caregivers and their teachers are interviewed independently on a yearly basis. The study is led by a team of researchers with mainly psychology backgrounds and is amongst others led by around David Farrington and Rolf Loeber. For a first publication on findings, see Keenan et al. (2010).

growing up in a low socio-economic household, associating with delinquent friends, attending high-delinquency rate schools and living in deprived areas at the environmental level. As a consequence, he advocated for different programmes, such as child skills training, parent training and management programmes and school and after-school programmes to reduce the likelihood of future offending behaviour (Farrington 2008: 4).

Based on Farrington's research as well as some other influential scholars in the field (Hawkins et. al, 1992; Rutter et. al, 1998;) the risk factor paradigm has become increasingly influential and in policy making has been described as a 'new industry of early intervention, based upon the ideology of 'risk' (Armstrong, 2004:102). Kemshall described the emergence of an industry in relation to 'youth at risk', quoting evidence of over 2500 academic articles (Swadener and Luebeck, 1995) on 'at risk' children and families published in the US (Kemshall, 2008). Sampson and Themelis (2009) argued that support for the risk-based prevention approach was gained by several meta analyses of prevention programmes, broadly agreeing that 'intervention works' (e.g. AIC 2002; Lipsey, 1996; Sherman et al. 1997,). In the UK for example, several youth justice policy frameworks and intervention programmes, have been designed around the risk factor paradigm.<sup>26</sup> Risk assessment tools such as ASSET have been developed to support practitioners in different areas of youth justice in determining young people's risk factor profiles (Sampson and Themelis, 2009).

But the risk factor framework is also used in other contexts, including national policy on social exclusion in the UK (France and Utting, 2005) <sup>27</sup> and in other contexts. In Australian Education policy for example, 'youth at risk' has become a widely used concept used to identify young people who seem unlikely to complete secondary education (te Riele, 2006). Formal risk assessment tools are also increasingly used and analysed in the Irish context. In Young People's Probation, the use of formal risk assessment tools (the YLS/CMI inventory) has been introduced since 2008 (O'Leary and Halton, 2009) and it is at the time of writing introduced across the GYDPs. In the Irish Probation Service for adults, the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), was introduced in 2004. Based on her semi-structured interviews with eight probation practitioners, Prendergast (2012) pointed out the tensions which practitioners experienced in combining their professional discretion, judgement and values on the one

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<sup>26</sup> These include for example, the 2001 Youth Crime Prevention Strategy of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (Armstrong 2004), the Scottish Youth Justice Policy (Whyte, 2003); the 2001 *Communities that Care Initiative* (France, 2005); the *On Track* crime reduction programme (Hine, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> France and Utting (2005) enumerate the following: the British *Children's Fund*; the *Sure Start* for newborn to four year olds in deprived areas and the *Positive Youth Development* pilot projects.

hand, and the managerialist demands placed on them by the introduction of the risk assessment tools on the other. While practitioners felt that the use of the LSI-R assessment tool provided them with a more structured guide and framework for assessing their clients, they also perceived that it was misguided when used for service development by managers. Similarly, Bracken's (2010) focus group interviews, conducted with Irish probation officers during 2007, revealed how some probation officers were concerned that formal risk assessment tools would disproportionately focus on community safety concerns over rehabilitative needs of offenders.

Commentators explained the risk-factor paradigm's political appeal in its achievement of certain symbolic ends (Smith, 2006), such as offering the state the opportunity to demonstrate that something is being done in relation to a particular 'problem' and in the context of scarce resources serves as a justification and selection mechanism for targeting those. In addition, one of its strengths as highlighted by O'Mahony (2009), an Irish academic and criminologist, is that it is easily understood without resorting to simple mono-causal explanations of youth crime (O'Mahony, 2009). In addition, it has been argued, that the risk factor paradigm has moved prevention increasingly towards social prevention, as opposed to situational/environmental youth crime prevention (France, 2007). Social crime prevention typically focuses on the achievement of broader goals of those participating in prevention programmes, such as gaining employment, or re-entering education etc., with the view that this could contribute to reduce the likelihood of offending behaviour. In this way, the risk-factor paradigm has also ensured a prioritisation of resources and energies to vulnerable groups and communities (France and Utting, 2005; Hine, 2005).

### **Critiques of the risk-factor prevention paradigm: essentialising young people**

The risk factor paradigm has been severely critiqued on a number of epistemological and practical grounds both generally as well as specifically in the area of youth justice (see e.g. Armstrong, 2006, 2008; Case, 2006; France, 2008; Kelly 2003; Kemshall 2008; Marutto and Hannah-Moffat 2005; O'Mahony, 2009; O'Malley 2004, 2007). Several of these critiques are particularly pertinent to consider in the context of youth crime prevention policy. In addition, the adoption of a governmentality perspective adds new insights into how risk can be understood as a technology of government based on particular assumptions and knowledge fields. Firstly, risk discourses have been critiqued for disguising through their promoted

'scientific neutrality' that they are in fact built around very particular constructions of young people and their offending behaviour. Kelly (2003) for example concluded in his analysis of several official government reports across different Anglo-European democracies, how the narrative of 'youth' was reduced to thinking about young people in terms of 'preferred futures' awaiting them, rather than being accorded status or rights in their own right: 'Youth, as it is constructed in at-risk discourses, is at risk of jeopardizing, through present behaviours and dispositions, desired futures' (Kelly, 2003: 171). Related to this, is what could be described as a simplistic understanding of young people's risk taking or offending behaviour. France (2000) dissected how contemporary models of 'risk-taking' would be based on three unquestioned assumptions about adolescence: that it is a natural/universal phase of the life cycle; that it is a dangerous period of storm and stress; that it involves the possession of a 'pre-social' self which must be found and developed within young people and finally that adolescence is a phase of irrationality where reason and cognitive skills remain underdeveloped. However, as he noted, each of these claims have been refuted by different bodies of research evidence, particularly those considering 'youth' in their specific socio-cultural contexts (see e.g. Mead, 1931; Musgrove, 1964; Cohen, 1997). Most importantly, these alternatives account for the socio-cultural contexts of young people's lives; pay attention to the importance of social interaction and power relations in the formation of risk perceptions and risk taking decisions; and also consider the possible habituation of practices, that could lead to the acceptance of certain risk taking activities as 'normal'. Similarly, Armstrong (2004) suggested that alternative knowledge bases, such as the sub-cultural theories on youthful offending, developed since the 1970s (see Hall and Jefferson, 1976, Hebdige, 1988, Willis 1977, 1990), subsequently re-defined (Cohen 1997; McRobbie 1991) and more recently re-invigorated (see Mac Donald, 2006; Shildrick, 2008) and were completely ignored in the context of English youth justice policy, thus individualising youthful offending and neglecting the well researched and established socio-cultural contexts and their impact on youthful offending.

### **The lack of predictive power**

A second critique of the risk factor paradigm to be noted in this context, is its actual lack of predictive power- paradoxically, the very strength that is often readily associated with the concept. Farrington himself (1999; 2000) conceded that it was difficult to ascertain the difference between causality and correlation of different factors to actual offending behaviour as well as to actually weigh the impact of different factors appropriately. Indeed, existing

research evidence (Armstrong, 2006:271) demonstrated that over 50% of children who have been identified as 'at risk' of offending behaviours by the UK Department for Education and Skills, outgrew these behaviours without ever having been exposed to any interventions. Armstrong et al (2004) argued that many children identified as 'low risk' offended and many who were categorised as 'high risk' didn't offend. Similarly, MacDonald (2006) in an analysis of three youth research studies located in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Britain (Teeside in North-East England), revealed how risk-factor analysis could only be applied to youth biographies with difficulty. Thus, the first study analysed by MacDonald found that the connection between school truancy and offending (as claimed by Farrington 1995) could not be related in a deterministic fashion. The study demonstrated that those with the most persistent, extensive later criminality patterns could not have been predicted with reasonable accuracy, based on their participation and success at school. Moreover, the study demonstrated that the same risk factors could have quite different consequences for the same individual, at different points in the life course.

### **Individualising young people's offending behaviour**

Third, the risk factor paradigm has been critiqued in relation to its individualising and exclusionary qualities. Thus, while contextual factors are typically acknowledged amongst risk factors, the emphasis is put on the young person and their families for addressing these challenges (see e.g. Hannah-Moffat, 1999). MacDonald (2006) noted this in his above mentioned study in relation to the social construction of risk and school truancy. A study reviewed by him pointed towards the sometimes arbitrary processes of official and unofficial exclusion (based on unreasonable policies in schools; lack of support in schools etc.), ultimately rendering statistical correlations between school exclusion and delinquency as an artefact. As a consequence, the study proposed that a more critical understanding of what exclusion represented was needed and that questions should be asked as to how particular children become labelled as 'problem children' through professional constructions. This also resonates with the proposition which suggests that the largely individualising construction of social exclusion has to be replaced with one where inequality is understood through differences between rich and poor, rather through the shortcomings of the disadvantaged (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010).

Kemshall (2008:28) interpreted this individualisation as distinct from contextualisation of risk, as constituting the 'responsibilisation agenda'. While risk-factors such as the 'socio-economic environment' and poverty are often cited as the contextual risk factor category associated with offending, solutions proposed tend to be individualised as more radical approaches relating to re-distribution of resources or the pursuit of a genuine rights agenda are eschewed. Resonating with Kelly's observations about the 'entrepreneurial self' constructed in contemporary youth policy (Kelly, 2006), Bandalli (2000) commented on how the 'new youth justice'<sup>28</sup>, responsabilises youth and young offenders by seeing active rather than passive citizens as the desirable norm and by requiring young people to self-manage risk from an early stage onwards.

In the same vein, other commentators note how the typical solutions proposed to address offending behaviour within a risk-factor based framework, such as counselling, cognitive learning programmes or cognitive skills training give little recognition to the broader impact of social context (Armstrong, 2004; France and Homel, 2006; Kemshall 2002; O'Malley 2006; Pitts 2001). Pitts (2001) maintained that cognitive skills training- a typical intervention in contemporary youth justice- was based on the underlying rationale of eighteenth century criminological classicism, assuming the 'rational' nature of the individual and ignoring a vast amount of literature that has shown the contextual influences on offending. Kemshall (2008:22) suggested that this 'rational-choice model' of offending behaviour is also a classed one, taking middle class young people who have access to good choices and opportunities, and who would have something to lose by making 'bad choices', as its norm, and making this applicable to all young people.

### **Exclusionary effects of the risk factor prevention paradigm**

The fourth critique addressed here extends beyond the individualisation critique of the risk factor approach. Thus, it is not only the possible negative consequences of prevention and early intervention (such as stigmatisation or rebellion/resistance, see e.g. Broom 2008), but also to the exclusionary effects of the risk factor approach in relation to young people's rights,

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<sup>28</sup> The 'new youth justice' has become a terminology commonly used by commentators who seek to describe various aspects of youth justice policy in England and Wales, implemented by New Labour from 1997 onwards, including typical features of 'advanced liberalism', such as responsabilisation of offenders, an emphasis on rights and responsibilities, individualisation of solutions to youthful offending, the promotion of the risk factor prevention paradigm, etc. (see Muncie, 2004 for a good overview).

which has to be considered. Commentators warn that the risk management framework further moves populations who are viewed as 'high-risk' and who are usually already at the margins of society into a network of scrutiny by the state and various professionals (Armstrong 2004; Bessant et al 2003; Lupton 1999; Pitts 2002). Kelly (2003) has written that our understandings of youth as 'youth at risk' is potentially harmful. As youth can be considered, according to Kelly (2000:301), as an 'artefact of expertise', constructed at the intersection of different knowledges in the areas of crime, education, family, unemployment, popular culture, transition, risk etc, these 'systems of thought' can shape an institutionalised mistrust of youth, potentially resulting in real consequences in the lives of young people. Kelly (2003) argued that this is manifested in an increasing variety of adult interventions into young people's lives on the basis of professional concerns about young people's welfare. As an example, he cited the increased involvement of youth, community and health workers in 'street work' with young people in Australian and Anglo-American settings, on projects that attempt to regulate 'anti-social' practices or to prevent crime. Kelly also argued in the same source, that the specialised field of 'youth studies' and research on risk factors and young people as cited above, aiming to better understand all aspects of young people's lives constituted a form of surveillance of contemporary youth populations: 'Youth Studies, as a diverse, heterogenous, but recognizable institutionally located intellectual activity, emerges as such so that youth, in all its variety, can be made knowable in ways that promise to make the government of youth possible' (Kelly, 2003:169).

Specifically with regards to children, Rose (1990) argued that from this perspective, seemingly 'progressive' developments in the welfare state have to be seen in a more ambiguous and complex light. Professional groups in cooperation with reformers and philanthropists utilised various panics about threats posed by certain groups of the population, e.g. juvenile offenders, to 'scrutinise and report upon the homes and their cases, and to undertake at least part of the normative assessment and reformation of children and their families' (Rose, 1990:129). Rather than extending citizenship directly to children through increasing social protection, rights to education and welfare, Rose (1990: 123) maintained that these policies and practices '... functioned to maintain inequality, to legitimate existing relations of power, and to extend social control over potentially troublesome sectors of society'. The issue of the question of young people's rights being sidetracked when they are being managed as a threat of anti-social behaviour and community life etc. is also highlighted by authors who specifically write in reference to penal policy. They have claimed that the application of the risk-factor paradigm



results in an erosion of universal rights for young people and children and has given rise to a framework where young people's rights are conditional upon what is deemed acceptable behaviour (Kemshall, 2008). Most importantly, Kemshall pointed out that the wide application of risk based policies has resulted in conditional rights and conditional justice for young people: young people have 'rights of access to education, training and the labour market, and the conditional right to belong to a community as long as positive behaviours and non-criminality are maintained'<sup>29</sup> (Kemshall, 2008:26). This shift towards conditional rights for young people, now characteristic of many aspects of youth policy, particularly in the British context, has also been facilitated through a re-balancing between individual rights and the community good (Sharland, 2006).

This point was also made by Gray (2011:244), who in her analysis of the failure of resettlement practices for young offenders in the UK, maintained that the construction of young people's needs and risk in terms of 'individual enterprise, pathologies and responsibilities...acts as a form of social regulation', ultimately deepening inequalities rather than addressing them. When structural constraints, such as for example supporting young people's successful reintegration into their communities or into workplaces, are not resolved through the redistribution of concrete opportunities, then young people who 'fail' to reintegrate accordingly upon release are pathologised and constructed as unsuccessful. Drawing upon Fraser (2003), Gray calls for a 'transformative-based' – as opposed to merely an 'affirmative-based' - youth justice agenda, which allows offenders to claim their rights related to resettlement policies (e.g. employment, place to live etc). Finally, the risk-factor prevention based paradigm has also been critiqued for excluding young people's voices and considerations of their needs as formulated by them. Axford and Little (2006), for example, pointed out that the risk-factor paradigm is 'adult-centred' and that it ignores young people's voices and perspectives (see also Burton et. al, 2004; Fleming and Kemshall, 2006; Sharland 2006).

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<sup>29</sup> Kemshall (2008) refers specifically to programmes such as *Sure Start* or *Connexions* in the British context- programmes which have been designed to address 'at risk' children and young people at particular stages of their life course, and where a range of 'risk factors' become the condition for access to services.

## **The remaining centrality of the risk factor prevention paradigm**

Despite these fundamental critiques and insights, risk factor thinking has become central in how professionals across a wide array of social fields decide how and when to work with young people. Control professionals, such as police officers, probation officers, social workers and increasingly also youth workers, are central to the operation of the risk management expert system. Through collecting information on internal characteristics and factors analysed through research, professional knowledge becomes the focus of the 'risk gaze'. Rose (1999) highlights how professionals are now being made responsible- and opt to be responsible for, as in the case of the voluntary youth work sector in Ireland - the management of 'dangerous' or potentially 'dangerous' individuals which the state cannot reach. As a consequence, he suggests that many professionals and agencies have been keen to redirect their services towards 'at risk' individuals, based on the argument that they are best suited to reach out to them or because other professionals don't succeed. This is strongly visible in Irish youth work discourse and is also evidenced by the strong focus on targeted youth work. In the search for constant improvement of the professional 'risk gaze', interventions are constantly re-aligned and further specified. Once addressed from this perspective, Rose's observation corresponds well to the development of the risk management framework in the context of youth justice.

In this configuration of control, a whole array of control agencies- police, social workers, doctors, psychiatrists, mental health professionals- become, at least in part, connected up with one another in circuits of surveillance and communication designed to minimize the riskiness of the most risky. They form a multiplicity of points for the collection, inscription, accumulation and distribution of information relevant for the management of risk. Whilst social notions of risk were universalizing, these risk agencies focus upon 'the usual suspects'- the poor, the welfare recipients, the petty criminals, discharged psychiatric patients, street people' (Rose, 1999: 260).

In the context of the findings of this thesis, Rose's conclusions do not to exaggerate the role of professionals in the risk factor project.

It is very difficult to find studies which move beyond a policy and discursive analysis of the risk factor paradigm in youth justice. One such study of note (Balucci, 2008) that tried to address this shortcoming, analysed in detail a specific risk assessment tool – the 'Youth Management

Assessment Form' - and its application in the context of a Canadian Youth House (an open custody facility) for female young offenders. Besides finding answers to very technical questions regarding this formalised risk assessment tool, Balucci (2008) investigated how administrators' personal beliefs, judgements and interactions with offenders shaped the risk assessment process. Interestingly, he found that administrators took a critical view of the risk assessment tools they used and were aware of their limitations. Front-line workers were found to have the discretionary power and authority to decide what should be known about offenders. Consequently this group operated as conduits, filters and interpreters of information, making risk assessment a human and not necessarily overly technical process. Professionals were found to serve as buffers, often resisting dominant policy discourses or requirements. However, he also argued that the application of the Youth Management Assessment (YMA) Form, served a second purpose of monitoring the actions of employees. As noted by Balucci (2008:193): 'The need to collect information about the offender supports the view that the YMA also governs administrators and counsellors'. In his interviews with counsellors and administrators using the YMA, Balucci identified how they were keenly aware of how their different responses offered in the YMA sheet might make them accountable to different degrees. Based on this concern, they frequently based their decisions on how they thought a particular response would reflect on them, rather than on young people's 'risk status'.

In drawing together these critiques, it is useful to think about risk factor analysis as an entry point in governing young people and different aspects of their lives through an ever widening set of interventions, as more and more risk factors are continuously developed and invented, justifying earlier and more intervention (Armstrong 2004; France, 2008; Kelly 2001; Rose and Miller, 1992; Stenson and Edwards 2003; Stenson and Watt 1999). This discursive construction of 'youth' then opens the way for early intervention and prevention into young people's lives. The risk factor approach is according to Rose (2000) understood as a technology to managing groupings of 'dangerous populations' rather than for diagnosing and intervening. Rose (2000) argued that risk factor tools are used to manage 'savage spaces' in 'anti- communities' to which the welfare state has no access. The risk framework is thus used to promote exclusionary circuits, where the margins of society are governed: 'The soul of the young citizen has become the object of government through expertise' (Rose, 1990:131).

According to the governmentality theorist Dean (2009:207), it can thus be argued that risk discourses seek to colonise the unruly and unknowable futures via the practices and activities of expertise ‘...Risk is analysed as a component of assemblages of practices, techniques and rationalities concerned with how we govern’. Kelly (2000:469) aptly describes the powerful hold of risk thinking over the governance of young people:

‘Institutionally structured relations of class, gender, ethnicity, ability and geography are imagined as complex, but quantifiable factors that place certain youth at risk. Once identified, measured and quantified within probabilistic rationalities, modes of intervention can be designed and implemented to enable regulatory projects that promise to ‘minimize the harm’ of these factors.’

It is thus important to understand and dissect/deconstruct ideas about risks, fear and uncertainty as they are powerful influences on community and policy responses to ‘dangerous’ youth. When applied to youth justice policy and youth crime prevention more specifically, from a governmentality perspective, it can be argued that the application of a risk management framework assists the state to manage its resources without resorting to a welfarist approach that was perceived by commentators from both the political right (Bazemore, 1996) and left (Pratt, 1989; Schur, 1973;) to be unsuccessfully used in British youth justice policy until the 1980s, but also does not resort to the other extreme, constructing young offenders as ‘bad’ people. This strongly resonates with a more corporatist approach to youth justice policy.

### **Alternatives to risk-focused discourses and interventions?**

As a response to the range of critiques raised against the risk-factor paradigm, numerous new forms of conceptualising the risk-framework in relation to offending behaviour have been developed. For example, a growing body of literature has sought to respond to the critique of individualisation by considering social context, social process and by taking the interaction between individual agency and social structure into consideration (Evans et. al, 2002; Furlong and Cartmel, 2006; Loeber 2001; Mac Donald 1998; Wikstroem and Farrington 2005, 2007). Similarly, the development of ‘protection-factors’ including items such as ‘strong social bonds between children, their families, schools and communities; positive rewards from adults etc.,

seeks to shift risk assessment from a deficit model to one based on a strengths analysis (e.g. Farrington 2000; Rutter et al. 1998). Schoon and Bynner (2003) have extended the notion of protective factors to one of resilience, in which they argue that social policy interventions have to occur along the entire life course of young people, and not just at certain junctions in their lives.

However, it is argued that despite these further mutations of the risk factor approach the logic applied therein remains the same. Critics suggest that the fascination with risk, does not address shortcomings such as ambiguities relating to the causal relationship or the weighing up of different protective factors and offending behaviour and as such maintains the essential reductionism of the risk factor paradigm (see Armstrong 2004; France and Utting, 2005; Kemshall 2008). Similarly the criticism that the employment of categories such as 'anti-social' or 'normality' are not questioned (Armstrong 2006:70; France 2008). Equally, the location of the 'problem' remains ultimately individualised, even if it is extended to for example the community. As Armstrong (2004:108) claimed, 'the focus of the investigation into the causes of crime becomes the relationship between the amoral individual within the context of dysfunctional communities' (Armstrong, 2004:108).

More radical changes to the risk factor paradigm have also emerged from a strongly qualitative field, where an emphasis is increasingly placed on individual narratives and biographies. These studies advocate for the inclusion of young people's perspectives and their participation in the risk assessment process. Armstrong (2004) for example proposes a 'pathways to prevention' approach, looking closely at young people's decision making processes involved in offending or resisting offending, and including their voice in the process. More importantly however, he suggests an increased reflexivity on behalf of researchers and practitioners to '...consider how policy and practice interventions with young people themselves are constituent parts of the social negotiation of 'risk' in the lives of young people, and as such, may operate to impose on them the label of deviance in particular situations' (Armstrong, 2004:2). MacDonald (2006) argued that in-depth biographical narratives are required to understand pathways of crime, which cannot be captured by the risk factor approach. Equally, he asserted that contemporary criminal careers could not be explained without reference to crucial historical-spatial processes, such as de-industrialisation; economic marginality and poverty for working class youth, which were usually not reflected in the risk-factor approach.

Sampson and Themelis (2009), who have critiqued risk based frameworks for not providing useful information for practitioners who are working with the young people classified by such frameworks, propose a re-conceptualisation of offending behaviour towards understanding it as a solution to a problem or a set of problems- i.e. as a creative and pro-active response to a social problem, not just to an individual one. They suggest that this model would present an alternative to the risk management approach, since it would also include motive and reasons for offending. In their study of four 'Youth Inclusion Programmes'<sup>30</sup> in the UK, they conducted interviews with young people in order to understand the effect their participation in programmes had on their motives, their feelings and emotions and their decision making process. Thus, they found, that young people's motivation to engage in offending behaviour was often not related to a 'traditional' risk factor, such as material gain, but often was a response to a social problem- such as marginalised young people wanting to establish and maintain their credibility in peer-groups or their wider communities. One successful solution to this problem was found in devising a 'true' community solution, which brought adults and young offenders together, in listening and working to address each others' views in relation to perceived challenges. Secondly, they also identified how interventions were more likely to work, when motivations and reasons for offending as articulated by offenders are understood and addressed through social programmes. As a consequence, they suggested that the negotiation of positive relationships (something that is routinely done or at least promoted in youth work practice) had the potential to alter the reasoning and motives of young people and enables them to reassess the 'logic' of their situation.

Case (2006) advocates for a re-focussing of the traditional risk-factor paradigm '...towards a universal and consultative methodology that augments its risk focus with measurements of the expressed needs of young people, the identification of factors that increase the likelihood of young people expressing need, and that encourage their engagement in positive and pro-social behaviour' (Case, 2006:175). Furthermore, he argued that 'embedding local consultative and inclusionary processes for working 'with' not 'on' young people as research participants, as opposed to research 'subjects' would serve to acknowledge young people's rights to consultation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Case 2006:176). This would

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<sup>30</sup> Youth Inclusion Programmes have been set up in 2008 by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and are aimed at 8-17 year olds who live in deprived/high-crime neighbourhoods and who are deemed 'at risk' of entering the criminal justice system. Young people are referred to the Programmes through a variety of channels (schools, social workers, etc.) and participate in a variety of skills and educational programmes with the view to reduce the likelihood of future offending behaviour (Youth Justice Board, 2012b).

as a consequence, serve to broaden the deficit- and risk based focus offending into a welfare and needs-based examination of wider issues related to social exclusion/inclusion and services provision, by creating a 'listening' culture, where young people can voice their views and be listened to at any time. Baker and Kelly (2011) sought to respond to the critique of the '...weak link between risk factors and risk trajectories (Kemshall, 2006:158) by including biographies and young people's narratives in the risk assessment process. They propose several steps designed to involve the young person in the risk assessment process in order to arrive at a 'shared understanding' of how young people understand their lives and events.

Finally, some examples of practical interventions point towards the implementation of alternatives to a risk-factor approach. In his description of the Australian 'Pathways to Prevention Initiative'<sup>31</sup> in Brisbane, France et. al (2010) points out how the initiative is targeted at communities, rather than individually selected children. This programme is focused on children's overall well-being in all areas- physical, spiritual, social, cognitive - as they transit through different life-phases. Services offered are not only aimed at affecting change within individuals, but also to assist them to understand and enhance the changes taking place in their environment. Risk in these programmes is not conceptualised in individual but in systemic terms:

'Viewed from this perspective, risk is a form of inequality. It serves as evidence of a contextual or system-level failure to support development. It follows, then, that the intent of the intervention activities undertaken within the project is two-fold—first, to enhance the capacity of individuals, families and communities to gain access to resources and opportunities (that is to empower and promote efficacy), and, second, to contribute to reform of wider systems and social structures that limit options for certain members of society (i.e. to establish processes for working within a developmental systems framework and to open up societal access routes' (France et. al, 2010: 2).

In their evaluation of a multi-agency youth consultation and crime prevention initiative in Swansea, Case and Haines (2004), showed how the initiative sought to build its preventive

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<sup>31</sup> The 'Pathways to Prevention Initiative' has been set up in 2001 in various Australian communities and aims to involve families, schools and wider communities in a broad range of interventions and activities (enhancing communication and social skills etc) with the aim to reduce the risk of offending amongst 4 to 6 year old children.

activities on the principles of social inclusion emphasising positive rather than punitive strategies. This was according to them achieved by changing 'the way young people think about themselves, their social and community situations and to encourage different behaviour based on this different thinking' (Case and Haines, 2004: 368). At the same time, the initiative also went beyond individual change but sought to achieve cultural shifts in the social communities young people chose to interact with as well as in a wider catchment area.

Hogeveen's (2006) account of a restorative youth justice initiative in Canada, the 'Youth Restorative Action Project', showed how alternative set ups are possible in youth justice contexts. The project- a grassroots initiative of a local youth group consisting of former offenders and non-offenders, and supported by a local politician, pursued a radical alternative. The local youth justice committee administering the project was entirely composed of young people. Adults were not accorded any formal decision-making power and were entirely excluded from proceedings of the youth justice committee. Instead, as one might suspect, of merely mimicking what other youth justice committees comprised of adults might suggest in terms of restorative actions in the administration, of youth justice, the committee had according to Hogeveen (2006) consistently proven to come up with innovative, creative and 'youth-friendly' solutions. Thus in addition to young offenders meeting with victims of their offending behaviour to fulfil the restorative element of the intervention, alternatives such as an offender producing and performing a hip-hop song expressing his experience with violence etc., were promoted with a view to facilitate a better understanding between offenders and their victims/the wider community.

Whether examples of 'third-generation' theories of risk and practical initiatives working with alternative models of assessment, participation and power, are truly a departure from the underlying assumptions of the traditional risk factor paradigm, remains a contested issue. Rose (1999: 260) for example suggests that the improvement of risk factor assessments does not remove their very logic: 'The incompleteness, fragmentation and failure of risk assessment and risk management is no threat to such logics, merely a perpetual incitement for the incessant improvement of systems, generation of more knowledge invention of more techniques, all driven by the technological imperative to tame uncertainty and master hazard' (Rose 1999: 260).



In her Foucauldian inspired study of the practices of working with offenders in a correctional facility in Canada, Eisler (2007) for example suggested that young people's participation in deciding over their fellow inmates' 'upgrading' to the second level (with access to more privileges), is not so much about empowering these young people to decide about their equals or in terms of encouraging a spirit of mutual interest etc, but as strategy to actively contribute to each others' subjectification as 'good' or 'bad' inmates (Eisler, 2007:110). Thus, from a post-structuralist perspective even, supposedly advanced and radical approaches to knowledge and practice when assessing or working with young people are open to question.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed and commented upon several bodies of literature relevant to the critical analysis of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP policy. It has demonstrated the usefulness of the corporatist model of youth justice to conceptualise and understand some of the features of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy and practice. In the chapter it is shown how the originally minimalist-interventionist approach of 'diversion' has incrementally shifted its focus towards prevention and increased levels of interventions. This shift and inevitable pull towards prevention and increased intervention can be understood when looking at how youth crime prevention, particularly in a historical context, can be understood as the meeting of particular constructions of young people and the essentially modern hope to reduce the likelihood of future possible events, such as offending behaviour. In the chapter it is shown how the dynamics of prevention generally and youth crime prevention more specifically are further reinforced by perpetually re-inventing themselves, as they carry the vested interests of different actors, particularly the state and the social professions.

In line with the post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis, this chapter demonstrated how a governmentality framework usefully extends the institutional focus of the corporatist youth justice model, by drawing attention to how perceived social problems such as youth crime are sought to be governed in advanced liberal societies through particular governmental rationalities and technologies. The discussion then focused on what could be described as typical features of advanced liberal youth crime prevention: a focus on the efficient implementation of policy at all levels, at the centre of concerns of youth crime prevention policy and practice; the responsibilisation of a broad range of agencies, civil society organisations and wider communities into the remit of youth crime prevention; the blurring of

boundaries and the extension of social control through seemingly benign interventions such as the GYDPs, the focus on behavioural containment and change as the main avenue to deal with (potential) young offenders and finally a focus on risk-based rationalities and technologies in the implementation of youth crime prevention initiatives. Here, particular emphasis was placed on highlighting alternatives to the currently pre-dominant risk-factor paradigm, while also pointing out that it was difficult to escape the 'doxic status'<sup>32</sup> (O'Sullivan, 2005:77) it has reached. The critical review of these different elements of advanced liberal youth crime prevention also shows how they mutually reinforce each other and form part of a larger advanced liberal rationality. For example, risk-factor rationalities bode well with an approach that focuses on behavioural change and containment, as both focus on individualising explanations and avenues to address these. Similarly, the involvement of different actors, such as youth work organisations, almost necessitates and increased focus on the central importance placed on policy implementation.

At the same time, by describing the different elements of a corporatist youth justice model combined with a discussion of advanced liberal governmentality, this chapter did not seek to create the impression of a uniform underlying rationality and associated technologies of governing in advanced liberal youth crime prevention regimes. It rather sought to also point out the tensions and contradictions within these different elements and rationalities. For example, in relation to inter-agency cooperation, the review of the literature has shown how it could be interpreted as either an improved arrangement for service delivery for young people, or the extension of a social control function beyond juridical agencies. Rather than seeking to resolve these tensions or seeking to find answers to them, both this literature review as well as the remainder of this thesis, seeks to engage with these different perspectives to provide a deeply layered analysis of contemporary youth crime prevention policy and practice. Throughout, this chapter also reviewed relevant literature on youth crime prevention and diversion in the Irish context. Here, it showed that the majority of critical commentary pertained to the Garda Diversion Programme, while only some work has been done to critically review Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Overall, it also demonstrated how Irish youth crime

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<sup>32</sup> In his analysis of discourses of educational paradigms, O'Sullivan developed the notion of a 'doxic paradigm' - based on Bourdieu's (1977) notion of 'doxa'- which usefully describes how truth claims come to exert power, namely through their very ubiquity and unquestioned status: 'A doxic paradigm is the ultimate in dominion in that not alone does it penetrate all aspects of life and all agents but there is no awareness of another reality outside of it' (O'Sullivan, 2005:38).

prevention policy and interventions- while well mapped and described- remain a largely under-theorised and explored field in the Irish context.

## **Chapter 5**

### **An analysis of contemporary discourses of Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP project discourse**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a critical reading of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP discourses, the identification of key discourse strands, as well as an analysis of underlying assumptions. Working closely with the materials presented in the policy and project archive in chapter 2, this chapter is concerned with identifying the ‘high politics’ (Freeman, 1999) or the ‘rationalities’ (Miller and Rose, 2007) of Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP project policy and discourse, how these are enabled through different discursive strategies (O’Sullivan, 2005) and how these are put into effect through different ‘technologies’ (Miller and Rose, 2007) or the ‘formation of strategies’ (Foucault, 1972). Throughout, the chapter highlights how these dominant discourses have specific ‘discursive effects’, for example in relation to constructing the young offender and their families as ‘objects of knowledge’ (Foucault, 1972) to be acted upon in specific ways. More specifically, this chapter first discusses three intertwined discourse strands which emerged through the analysis of the relevant policy archives and which are reflective of broader governance patterns in advanced liberal societies (Miller and Rose, 2007; Rose, 1997;) and corporatist youth justice models (Crawford, 1997, 1998; Pratt 1989 and Smith 2000) more specifically. These include: the centralisation of leadership, the responsibilisation of partners and actuarialism. Second, this chapter takes a closer look at how young people and their offending behaviour were constructed in official youth crime prevention policy and GYDP project discourse, creating the ‘youthful subject’ in particular ways, prescribing certain ways of being and acting, while excluding others. Here, a close reading of the contemporary policy and project archive revealed two major discourse strands which will be discussed in turn: young people’s near disappearance and lack of active presence in policy texts, which were mainly concerned with systemic issues and their offending behaviour as an assemblage of calculable, often individualised risk factors. Finally, this chapter seeks to draw out how official project discourse has introduced several technologies aimed at governing project workers. All of the analysis undertaken in this chapter forms the foundation for subsequently presenting the analysis of interview materials in a way which demonstrates how dominant discourses ‘travel’ and related technologies exert influence over how they can be utilised.

## Centralisation of leadership and responsabilisation of GYDPs

The centralisation of leadership in tandem with the concurrent 'responsibilisation' (Crawford 1998; Garland, 2001; O'Malley; 1992) of other societal actors as 'partners' in contemporary criminal justice systems more generally as well as in youth crime prevention more specifically, mirrors similar trends in other social policy sectors. Across sectors, commentators describe these processes as the introduction of new ways of governing; as a shift in the function of the state from 'rowing' to 'steering' (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), as 'governing at a distance' (Garland, 2001; Rose 1996) and as the creation of the 're-centring/de-centring dialectic' (Crawford 2001). Policy making is firmed up at the core and becomes 'binding' for other agencies, yet also gains a local dimension, as local actors are accorded responsibility and sufficient flexibility for implementing the 'core's' strategic vision.

In the Irish youth justice context more generally, this emphasis on centralisation of leadership and the involvement of actors through partnership arrangements has been of longstanding concern. In fact it has been noted without exception in every single public policy document since the early 1960s dealing with crime, children and young people (see e.g. the Kennedy Report of the Committee on the Reformatory and Industrial School System; the 1980 Task Force Report on Child Care Services; the 1992 Dail Select Committee on Crime on Juvenile Crime and its remedies). In legal and institutional terms, it was however only the Children Act 2001 and the ensuing creation of the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2005 which concretely addressed these concerns. In fact, the significance of the Children Act 2001 in terms of moving the Irish youth justice system towards a 'corporatist' model of youth justice is one that has not received attention in the literature.

The creation of the Irish Youth Justice Service bears witness to the central task of leadership accorded vis-a-vis other possible priorities in youth justice policy. Indeed, the main responsibilities of the IYJS are all related to exercising 'leadership functions'<sup>1</sup> and this was also repeatedly emphasised in official policy discourse and given priority. It was telling for example that the first high level goal of the first *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* aimed at

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<sup>1</sup> These include: developing a unified youth justice policy; devising and developing a national strategy to deliver this policy and service; linking of this strategy with other child related strategies; co-ordinate service delivery at both national and local level; establish and support consultation and liaison structures with key stakeholders, also at local level; etc. (IYJS, 2012).

making 'the youth justice system more effective through providing clear, unified and strategic leadership' (IYJS, 2008a:22) and this preceded the goal of reducing offending. In the following, I will take a closer look at how both related, yet separate elements of centralisation of leadership and responsabilisation of partners has been discursively constructed, revealing some of its underlying assumptions and rationales.

### **Centralisation of leadership**

The rationale of centralised leadership presented in official policy discourse was based on the assumption that improved management and better co-ordination would deliver improved outcomes for young people. In his foreword to the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* (IYJS, 2008a) the Junior Minister for Children from 2007-2008, Brendan Smith for example re-stated what had by then become an unquestioned fact in Irish Youth Justice Policy, namely that lack of leadership was the key problem requiring attention. The Irish Youth Justice Service, he reminded the reader, was created to address the 'main problems with the youth justice system: a lack of leadership and coordinated service delivery for children in trouble with the law' (IYJS, 2008a:v). Similarly, the Director of the Irish Youth Justice Service emphasised in the first corporate newsletter: 'The significant challenge for me is to bring about a modern and integrated system'.

The assumption that better coordination and management leads to better outcomes for young people, has been repeatedly critiqued by commentators. Gray (2009) for example suggested that the logic of increasing coordination of services tends to locate responsibility for offending with the individual young person and to deflect from society's broader responsibility towards young people. It could indeed be argued that the central importance accorded to the argument that better coordination and management leads to better outcomes for young people is a strategy to defer the understanding of the reasons of offending behaviour. In his analysis of the cultural politics of education in Ireland since the 1950s, O'Sullivan (2005) has described the 'deferral of understanding' towards simplified understandings of disadvantage. This was one of the main strategies employed by the Irish State from early 2000 onwards in steering partners' perception of and facilitating their actions towards prioritising the issues of disadvantage as a key factor to be addressed by a broad range of initiatives and actors.

To implement its leadership function in youth justice policy, the Irish Youth Justice Service has deployed several technologies. This included for example the definition of a number of goals

and targets for Government departments and agencies to 'help measure progress and to assess where available resources should be targeted' (IYJS 2008b:2), in relation to achieving centrally the agreed goals for each agency.<sup>2</sup> Second, the IYJS also publishes newsletters and organises conferences with the goal to fulfil its leadership role. Both fora represent important vehicles for the IYJS to assert its leadership functions through agenda setting in very visible domains for other statutory and voluntary agencies. This was for example made explicit by Brendan Smith, Junior Minister for Children at the opening of the first IYJS conference in 2008: 'The holding of this conference is another key step in advancing our collective understanding of the problems and possibilities facing all of us and a chance to work together to ensure that the best possible outcomes are provided to young people at risk of offending in our community' (Smith, 2008). Similarly, referring to the Irish Youth Justice Services' use of newsletters and conferences, the National Director of the IYJS mentioned in the first newsletter: 'Together, these measures ensure that the message of the IYJS is disseminated and more notably, that inter-agency co-operation and partnership in the area of youth justice service provision is encouraged' (IYJS 2008a: 2).

These latter two excerpts reveal how statutory and voluntary were welcomed and 'membershopped' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 38) as partners which involved an alignment of thoughts and ideas. This was further evidenced by the emphasis placed on consultation and consensualism in contemporary Irish youth justice policy. For example, in The Irish Youth Justice Service Director's speech to the first Irish Youth Justice Conference her mention of 'buy into our strategy', was a strong indicator of the efforts undertaken to achieve the support of different partners.

'I am very grateful for the cooperation we have received so far in advancing our work, particularly from the criminal justice agencies: We have learnt very early on that we can only be successful if we have the full cooperation of all the main stakeholders. A key challenge for us in the future will be to enhance the cooperation of all the other organisations and to ensure 'buy in' to our strategy.'

This choice of words was also revealing in so far as it implicitly revealed the contested role of 'partnerships' in Irish public policy more generally, where critics argue that the term 'partnership' disguises unequal power relationships between the state on the one hand and

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<sup>2</sup> The agencies involved are: An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and Young Person's Probation, the Courts Service and the Irish Prisons Service.

civil society organisations on the other (Meade and O'Donovan, 2002; Murphy, 2002; Powell, 1997).

The centralisation of leadership has also been a core feature with regards to GYDP policy more specifically and has been institutionalised by locating the GYDPs under the auspices of the IYJS and by making the GYDPs into a central aspect of the national youth justice policy. Thus, the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* set out as a key action under Goal 2: 'To make existing intervention measures more effective in reducing offending behaviour. In doing so, promote good practice in the delivery of the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme and the Garda Youth Diversion Projects' (IYJS, 2008a: 12). The centralisation of leadership in relation to the GYDPs was achieved through the deployment of three specific technologies: first, the completion of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) which aimed at 'providing a vision for future practice' (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009b: foreword). Second, the introduction of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), which entailed several significant changes in relation to reporting, auditing, training and networking of GYDPs and project workers, and third the implementation of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) through a piloting process, which gradually involved an increasing number of projects in the change process. The specifics of these technologies will be discussed below, but what is important to highlight at this stage is that the centralisation of leadership in relation to the projects is a prime example of how the centring/de-centring dialectic, so characteristic of corporatist youth justice systems, was deployed strategically to achieve desired outcomes.

This can be illustrated at the example of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Thus on the one hand, the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) has introduced significant changes to project administration, which narrow the focus of the projects as exclusive youth crime prevention projects. These changes have been decided unilaterally by the Irish Youth Justice Service. On the other hand, the importance of local expertise, knowledge and ultimately responsibility of each project to achieve these centrally decided priorities logics was repeatedly emphasised. The *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) thus asserted for example that 'the opportunity for innovation will be located with local management companies and youth organisations. A local GYDP is best positioned to analyse local circumstances, develop its logic, deploy its own resources and negotiate its own path to improvement for young people' (IYJS, 2009b:64). This duality of centralisation on the one hand and responsabilisation on the others is at the very core of corporatist youth justice and carries with it an inherent contradiction: on the one hand,



the reform agenda repeatedly emphasises subsidiarity and assigns responsibility to projects at the local level, yet it was considered necessary to achieve fundamental changes, based on centrally pre-defined criteria.

### **Responsibilisation of partners and GYDPs**

The responsibilisation of partners across the statutory and voluntary sectors in crime prevention more generally and Irish youth crime prevention more specifically, is a corollary process to the centralisation of leadership which has achieved unquestioned status and has been described in other contexts as a central feature of contemporary criminal justice systems (Cohen, 1985; Garland 2001). Crime prevention has become everybody's business and now extends beyond the juridical sector. This has been heavily critiqued by several commentators, who speak of a 'blurring of boundaries' (Cohen, 1985), or the 'criminalisation of social policy' (Crawford, 1997; Goldson, 1999, 2000, 2002; Kelly, 2003; Kemshall, 2008; Muncie and Hughes 2002), and the extension of the 'gaze' over children and young people in the name of prevention (Rose, 1996). In the Irish context, responsibilisation of partners into various state agendas has been an increasingly central feature of the corporatist welfare state for over three decades and also forms the core feature of approaches to crime prevention more generally. For example, the *Crime Prevention Strategy for Ireland* developed by the National Crime Council in 2003, outlined the inclusion of a wide range of agencies and groups in policy planning as well as implementation of the envisaged local crime prevention policies. This was seen as particularly important 'so that all relevant parties, not just those who specifically work with offenders or young people 'at risk' can be involved in implementing the *Strategy* and finding solutions' (National Crime Council, 2003a: 20). More recently, the *White Paper on Crime Prevention* reiterated that 'effective crime prevention needs a proactive, whole of society approach' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs, 2009:5).

In Irish contemporary youth crime prevention policy more specifically, the responsibilisation agenda has been operationalised at several levels. 'Consultation' with various stakeholders has become one of these mechanisms commonly used in the preparation of policy papers across different sectors. In the development of the *National Youth Justice Strategy* for example, various government departments and agencies, non-governmental agencies and civil society,

including young people, were asked to make submissions for consideration in the strategy.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, other agencies were also involved in the supervision of the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* through the *Strategy Oversight Group*<sup>4</sup> which is responsible for effective implementation as well as the facilitation of cross-agency collaboration. However, the lack of independence of this Oversight Group – it consists only of statutory agencies- has been critiqued as being a ‘tokenistic’ exercise (Kilkelly, 2008). Finally, the responsabilisation strategy extends to local level through the creation of Local Youth Justice Teams, involving key local agencies working together at local level.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of the GYDPs more specifically, ‘partnership’ between different agencies, if only formally between the Gardai and youth work organisations,<sup>6</sup> has always been the cornerstone of the projects, based on the justification that complex needs ask for ‘complex’ solutions. The same logic can also be found in current project discourse: ‘The experience of the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) reflects to a large degree, the broad research finding that the reasons for young people becoming involved in offending are often complex and multi-systemic.....It follows that multi-systemic responses are required to offset the multiple risks faced by young people’ (IYJS, 2009b:46). However, the analysis conducted for this study suggests that this most recent period of project reform is responsabilising projects and their staff in a *new* way and into a partnership of a specific quality. The reduction of youth crime is prioritised over young people’s needs: ‘Garda Youth Diversion Projects cannot respond to all these needs [that project participants are faced with] and have to make judicious choices about the best use of limited resources to make their most effective impact on crime reduction’ (IYJS, 2009b:46).

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<sup>3</sup> The Appendix to the NYJS outlines the different actors who have provided submissions. They were received by a wide range of institutional actors, mainly from the statutory sector, for example the Courts Service, the Department of Education and Science, the Health Service Executive, the Office of the Minister for Children), but also from the voluntary/community based sector, for example Barnardos and the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty Against Children.

<sup>4</sup> Membership of the IYJS Oversight Group consists exclusively of representatives from statutory agencies, including the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Youth Justice Service, the Health Service Executive, the Department of Education and Skills and An Garda Síochána.

<sup>5</sup> To date, Local Youth Justice Teams have not been set up as envisaged originally in the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*. At the time of writing it seems unclear how this will proceed or how the Local Youth Justice Teams would relate to the local Children’s Services Committees currently piloted across different locations.

<sup>6</sup> In the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) for example, ‘partnership’ beyond that of the GYDPs main stakeholders, i.e. the Gardai and the implementing youth work organisation receives very limited attention. ‘Partnership’ in the broader sense is only mentioned at the very end of the document where it is stated that the IYJS ‘will ensure ongoing consultation with the OMCYA to promote better local partnerships’ (IYJS, 2008a:59). The role of different potential partners or strategies how to engage with them are not outlined.

Rather, projects now have to demonstrate that their 'contribution should be clear, measurable and have an inherent logic, regarding their role as either, breaking the chain of a particular sequence of events leading to a criminal act or reducing risk(s) implicit in the young person's circumstances and which increase their chances of becoming involved in a criminal act' (IYJS, 2009b: 49).

Rhetorical support for the 'responsibilisation' strategy was provided through continuously acknowledging partners in statutory and voluntary sectors for supporting respective strategies and policies. Possible differences, which might have been evident throughout the consultation processes or otherwise (e.g. in practice), were omitted and not discussed at any stage. As a consequence, a unified position is presented, suggesting that there was only one singular and uncontested voice in current youth crime prevention discourse. For example, it was stated in *the National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* that: 'The Irish Youth Justice Service very much appreciates the assistance and support it received from all those involved and their continued commitment to this strategy and its implementation' (IYJS, 2008a: 8). Similarly, the Director of the Irish Youth Justice Service mentioned in her foreword to the *Baseline Analysis*: 'The willingness of our partners in the youth organisations delivering GYDPs to strive for further improvement in their effectiveness will be a critical factor in improving our effectiveness in reducing youth crime' (IYJS, 2009b: foreword). It was made evident here that youth organisations were needed to achieve the 'effectiveness agenda' taking a central role in the current reform process. The public expression of appreciation of partners reinforced an apparent consensus around the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*.

Similarly, throughout the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b), this process of 'membershopping' of youth organisations was achieved through 'enjoining agreement' (O'Sullivan, 2005:323): 'The findings of the report have been shared with all the projects that participated in this exercise and it is clear from the feedback we have received that there is an appetite for change. This is encouraging' (IYJS, 2009b: foreword). Furthermore, through the orientation and facilitation of action, project staff are asked to show 'genuine commitment to introduce the necessary change to bring about improvement for the young people and communities being served' (IYJS, 2009b: 59). This co-operation with and perceived pursuit of excellence in achieving the centrally agreed goals is rewarded: 'The Irish Youth Justice Service will seek to promote those projects which strive for excellence' (IYJS, 2009b: 60). Thus, a process is set in motion which is at least on paper beyond contestation.

## Accounting for Change

Contemporary youth crime prevention and GYDP policy were throughout characterised by different elements of actuarialist discourses. The emergence of 'actuarialist justice' has been described as the shift from punishing past offences to predicting as accurately as possible future offences based on the insurance principle. As a result, it is not necessarily the human subject who takes centre stage, but an increasing emphasis is placed on economic rationalities which focus on cost-benefit analysis, performance and quantitative/numeric analyses (Simon and Feeley, 1994:185). Another element of actuarialist justice, is the increasingly unquestioned importance attributed to 'evidence-based' interventions as well as data collection and information sharing in the name of improved service delivery. The strong presence of these different elements of actuarialist discourses in Irish youth crime prevention policy might not be surprising given the close relationship between the idea of prevention and corollary concepts of prediction and risk calculation. Yet its pervasiveness was notable.

A prime example was the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* which throughout, emphasised different elements of actuarialist discourses. The very structure of the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* was reflective of the actuarialist agenda. A set of agreed 'tangible' actions is outlined for different statutory actors under each of the five High Level Goals and its respective objectives. This is done with the view to 'improve service delivery' (IYJS, 2008a:11). Each action is being managed through the formulation of specific performance indicators and targets to be met by these different actors. The *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* further emphasised how the developments of programmes aimed at reducing youth offending had to be 'effective and representing value for money' (IYJS, 2008a:11). This was followed shortly by reiterating that the 'IYJS will develop appropriate research and data, and be mindful of value for money issues' (IYJS, 2008a:11).

Throughout the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*, centrality was also accorded to the use of 'risk assessment' which was presented as being able to target interventions of the right type at the right type of person and as a consequence make the most efficient use of available resources. This was also emphasised by the National Director of the Irish Youth Justice Service in her speech to the IYJS Conference 2010, where she again reiterated the following two measures under the sub-heading of 'improving outcomes': 'the use of targeted and evidence based programmes and introducing a standardised risk assessment tool across the whole

justice system.’ Her statement was a prime example of the expectation placed on actuarialist tools and also bears witness to the unquestioned status of truth that these discourses have gained despite highly relevant critiques thereof. It was also interesting to note at this point, that the introduction of standardised risk assessment tools is building on the work which has already been implemented in the Probation Service and is now being extended to include even more informal interventions (such as the GYDPs).

A further example of the pervasiveness of actuarialist discourses in contemporary youth crime prevention policy was the language used throughout the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b). In this fashion, the expenditure on projects was described as an ‘investment’ (IYJS, 2009b: 7) and logic statements<sup>7</sup> were defended as useful because they could be audited (IYJS, 2009b: 14). The aim of the preparation of logic statements was that projects’ contribution to the reduction of youth crime should be ‘clear, measurable and have an inherent logic’, so that projects could improve their ‘overall performance’ (IYJS, 2009b: 14).

Given the economic downturn from 2008 onwards, the emphasis placed on ‘value for money’ gained increased significance. For example, the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) justified the introduction of ‘logic statements’ in which projects outline how their specific project activities would contribute to the reduction of youth crime in their respective localities, by alluding to tax payers’ investment and the promise of accountability: ‘In terms of service development such a statement [logic statement] provides a clear transparency in relation to how a project intends to use the public investment to its best effect in reducing youth crime in its locality’ (IYJS, 2009b:14). Similarly, in her address to the Irish Youth Justice Service Conference 2010, the Director of the Irish Youth Justice Service highlighted that ‘the current economic climate and the efforts to bring about greater efficiency in the youth justice system as part of wider public sector reform, makes it more important than ever that we strive to deliver an effective system with good outcomes for children’ (Shannon, 2010:1).

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<sup>7</sup> Introduced by the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), ‘logic statements’ now form an integral part of the new Annual Plan format. In these ‘logic statements’ projects have to show how their work plan and activities are linked to reducing specific types of youth crime occurring in their respective catchment areas.

## Effective systems and practices

One particularly notable element of actuarialist discourses in contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy as well as GYDP discourses was the frequent references to ‘effectiveness’ at all levels. However, it was nearly impossible to pin down what was actually meant by the term ‘effectiveness’. The only definition found across the entire policy archive<sup>8</sup> was offered by the Report on the Irish Youth Justice Review, which defined effectiveness as ‘systems’ functioning, without making explicit how this would impact on young people:

‘the development of consistent and comprehensive information about youth offending; using that robust information base to support evidence-based interventions, policy and practice; securing value for money outcomes from monitored policy and practice; bringing a unique focus for the evaluation of spending on youth justice services’ (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005: 34).

I would suggest that the ubiquity and correlating vagueness of the term was indicative of how the concept of ‘effectiveness’ has come to be used as a rhetorical strategy which seeks to place what it considers ‘effective’ beyond question. For example, in the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*, the outcome related to ‘effective monitoring’ was described as the ‘establishment of the National Youth Justice Oversight Group’ (IYJS, 2008a: 22). In this way, the outcome then was put beyond questioning, despite having been significantly been critiqued for its lack of independence.

The discourse of ‘effectiveness’ was also contained in several oral presentations given at the first biennial conference of the IYJS. For example, the National Director of the IYJS emphasised in her presentation to the conference in relation to working with other agencies, that ‘we will make every effort to ensure that the programmes delivered across the system ranging from diversion to probation and finally detention, are as effective as possible, evidence based, and that resources are used wisely and represent value for money’ (Shannon, 2008).

The very rationale of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was based on the repeated assertion that GDYPs’ effectiveness had to be improved. However, it was difficult to establish why the projects were not considered effective in the first place. Given the lack of available

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<sup>8</sup> The reviewed policy archive spanned the time frame from 2002-2011 (see Chapter 2, Table 2.1).

data on what seemed to be of importance, e.g. participants' pathways in and out of crime, it was not possible to establish how 'effective' the projects have been to date. Nevertheless, the entire *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) was underpinned by the assumption that the GYDPs were not working as 'effectively' as possible, justifying the need for change. And although the term 'effectiveness' was used very frequently throughout the document, the meaning attributed to the term was again not made clear. Ultimately, the underlying logic behind this demand for 'effectiveness' seemed to be based to a large extent on the fallacy that it is actually possible to conclusively establish - and in isolation from other factors - how any type of intervention actually contributed to reducing offending behaviour in an area or with an individual young person.<sup>9</sup>

### **Evidence-based interventions**

Associated with this emphasis on 'effectiveness', was the recurring theme of collecting more information on children and young people and sharing this information accordingly between different organisations, with the view to tracing and measuring impacts and outcomes of interventions. The rationale presented for 'evidence-based' interventions in the *Irish Youth Justice Review of 2005* reflected well the underlying logic of the actuarialist discourse of contemporary youth crime prevention discourse. Thus, the *Review* suggested that while social inclusion measures could indirectly impact on the root causes of crime, their concrete impacts could not be evaluated. As a consequence the *Review* suggested that 'further development is required of specific measures which target young people who are most likely to offend/re-offend. Interventions should be based on research as to what works and should use risk assessment tools to identify particular young people at risk of offending.' The logic presented here was a telling indicator of the overall actuarialist character of contemporary Irish youth justice and youth crime prevention policy. Priority is accorded to a 'what works' agenda- not necessarily because it might achieve 'better' outcomes for young people, but because it can be evaluated more clearly in terms of impact.

Related to the discourse of evidence-based interventions was the emphasis placed throughout the policy and project material on collecting data on children and young people. The lack of

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<sup>9</sup> Biesta (2010) argues that the idea that evidence of interventions in areas of human interaction, such as for example education, is based on fallacy and is ultimately impossible. He suggests that, the evidence-based agenda has developed on the basis of supposedly scientific understandings of 'evidence'. However in reference to Pasteur's work on the *Pasteurization of France* (1988), he shows that even in traditional 'science', the evidence-based agenda is a fallacy.

available information on children generally in Ireland and on children/young people in the youth justice system more specifically has been pointed out for decades and is being addressed through major state investments, such as for example the Longitudinal Study on Children.<sup>10</sup> Thus, one of the five High Level Goals of the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* sets out 'to strengthen and develop information and data sources in the youth justice system to support more effective policies and services' (IYJS, 2008a: 19). The expectation presented here was that the collection of more information on the young offending subjects would be useful in finding solutions to youthful offending: 'This [the deficit in accessible information in the youth justice system] impacts on the depth of analysis that can be done to identify problems and find solutions to young people offending' (IYJS, 2008a: 19).

However, the important point to make in relation to the emphasis placed on research and data collection on young people was that it did not happen in a knowledge-neutral vacuum, but was reiterating the dominant logic of thinking about young people and offending. Thus, the first pieces of research commissioned by the Irish Youth Justice Service focused on the development of a risk assessment tool (Young, 2009).. Reflective of the actuarialist discourse of justice, the logic presented for example for the development of assessment tools, was not based on young people's needs, but on the supposed ability of these tools and interventions to measure outcomes. In her speech to the 2010 Youth Justice Service Conference, the National Director of the IYJS clarified that the development of 'appropriate assessment tools' enable the Irish Youth Justice Service to 'target interventions and measure change in the behaviours of the young people concerned' (Shannon, 2010:5). Similarly, the most recent research commissioned by the Irish Youth Justice Service focused on 'Investigating associations between empathy, impulsivity, pro-social behaviour and criminal activity among children in contact with juvenile justice services' (Irish Research Council, 2012) reflecting the pathologising and individualising discourse on young people and their offending behaviour

The 'evidence-based' discourse was particularly strongly pronounced in the context of the GYDPs. Here, the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) conducted to initiate the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was underwritten by the rationale of gathering an 'evidence base' for justifying the decided changes. Notably though, the rationale provided was again based on the

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<sup>10</sup> The Children's Longitudinal Survey *Growing Up in Ireland* was set up in 2008 by the Irish Government with the view to conduct large scale, longitudinal research on two different cohorts of infants and children, collecting a wide variety of data aimed at supporting evidence-based policy making for children's services (ESRI, 2012).



needs of decision makers- not that of young people: 'It is critical that decision makers are able to access sound evidence in order to make the effective decisions. In addition to processing the learning from research evidence, there is a clear need for good quality local data to assist a project to identify the size and scope of the challenge it faces (IYJS, 2009b: 48).

However, a closer analysis suggested how limited the understanding of producing an 'evidence-base' was in reality. The first critique related to the way in which evidence was produced, i.e. the methodology of evidence collection and analysis. The *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) was undertaken 'in-house' by the Irish Youth Justice Service under the leadership of the Head of Young Offenders Programmes and was conducted through a combination of literature research as well as site-visits to the majority of GYDPs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with project staff and local Gardai (JLOs and Community Gardai)<sup>11</sup>. However, the questions posited as part of the semi-structured interview were based on the 'risk factor paradigm' (IYJS, 2009: 13), thus foreclosing any discussion of alternative knowledge resources in relation to young people and their offending behaviour.

Similarly, the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) claimed to pay attention to young people's complex needs and as a consequence, proposed 'multi-systemic' responses: 'The experience of the baseline analysis reflects to a large degree, the broad based research finding that the reasons for young people becoming involved in offending are often complex and multi-systemic'. However, this then seemed to be left to one side as throughout the study there was no reflection on this 'complexity' and it wasn't made clear what was meant by 'multi-systemic' (IYJS, 2009b:46). Nevertheless, the document concluded that: 'multi-systemic responses are required to offset the multiple risk-factors faced by young people, particularly in neighbourhoods experiencing high levels of crime' (IYJS, 2009b:46). All of this put into question the promulgated narrative of 'evidence-based interventions' and highlighted how the privileging of certain types of knowledge, exerts power.

A very visible effect of this knowledge-power relationship was the interventions with young people and their families suggested as a response to the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b). For example, in reference to 'interventions to reduce risk associated with youth crime', the *Baseline Analysis* suggested the following as a possible measure: 'support could be elicited to provide a parenting intervention with sufficient dosage to effect attitude change and a more

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<sup>11</sup> The *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) involved visits to 96 of the 100 projects in existence at the time of writing the *Baseline Analysis*.

active case management of school attendance' (IYJS, 2009b: 51). Terms more typically associated with medical practices ('dosage') were utilised, reflecting modes of intervention which would seek to individualise and pathologise young people and their families.

A second key critique in relation to the 'evidence-based discourse' promulgated in the *Baseline Analysis* is related to what could be described as 'pseudo' scientific discourse. In several instances, the baseline study betrayed its own aims of offering an 'objective' baseline from which to start project alignment through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). For example, the document sought to establish numerical accounts and comparisons between projects, although it based this part of the analysis on semi-structured discussions (IYJS, 2009b:11). The reader was informed that this was a valid strategy for 'approximate comparisons, sufficient enough to make more general strategic analysis possible' (IYJS, 2009b:190). It is however highly questionable how 'objective' accounts of JLOs and Community Gardai could ever be in this respect and how they could lend themselves to the kind of comparisons offered as a result in the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b). The document also did not highlight from which specific systematic data source these 'stories' of youthful offending were obtained. From a strictly scientific point of view- it was the anecdotal evidence so often decried by the advocates of evidence based practice.

Another example of the 'pseudo-scientific' foundation of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) could be found in the chapter dedicated to anchor the 'results' of study within the framework of current research on youth offending. Although the chapter aimed to add weight to the approach taken in the document, this was done rather carelessly. For example, there were references to 'longitudinal studies' (e.g. IYJS, 2009b: 44) without adequately elaborating on the details. It was almost as if a 'longitudinal study' has some intrinsic value of its own, just by being 'longitudinal'. Similarly, the attempt to provide the *Baseline Analysis* with a more 'scientific' character was not successful as references made were cosmetic rather than in any way substantial: 'The often conflicting academic discourse relating to youth crime demands that Garda Youth Diversion Projects be informed by the available research evidence from longitudinal studies, but also to be sufficiently reflective to innovate where there is a clear under-lying logic for action' (IYJS, 2009b: 46). There was no discussion of what 'often conflicting academic discourse' related to, which 'longitudinal stuies' were being alluded to and how they provide sound evidence for working with young people within the framework of Garda Youth Diversion Projects, or what a 'clear underlying logic for action' meant.

In conclusion, it could be argued that the establishment of an evidence base brings particular kinds of knowledge types to the fore, while marginalising others. The *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) attempts to establish knowledge categories (e.g. knowledge pertaining to risk factors) which – despite acknowledgement of critiques thereof, are put beyond question: ‘There is no consensus identifying the causes of juvenile crime or the most effective interventions. However, there are indicators for both which it would be remiss to ignore and which strike a resonance in this baseline analysis’ (IYJS, 2009b: 44).

### **Young people and dominant policy discourses: marginalised through text**

A critical analysis of the policy archives (see chapter 2) representing contemporary youth crime prevention and GYDP policy discourse was also undertaken with respect to how young people and their offending behaviour were represented. Two major themes emerged here which will be discussed in detail in the ensuing sections. The first is the near exclusion of young people at several levels relating to their rights or capabilities, their exclusion from genuine participation in policy formulation and their subordination to larger issues related to ‘community safety’. Second, the objectification of young people and their offending behaviour as measurable quantities who can be acted upon at those points where risks are identified and where interventions seem most promising, lending themselves to immediately measurable and visible results.

Throughout official discourses, young people were found to be subordinated to the goals of crime reduction and community safety. This for example became apparent when considering the IYJS’s mission statement, as outlined in the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*: ‘To create a safer society by working in partnership to reduce youth offending through appropriate interventions and linkages into services’ (IYJS, 2008a:2). I suggest that a mission statement represents an intensification of power-knowledge in a text, since it forms an overarching statement imbued with ‘authority’ and sets the scene for subsequent policy and practice. Thus, it was telling that the creation of ‘a safer society’ was in the mission statement prioritised as the ‘end goal’, rather than a means of contributing to improving young people’s lives in terms of for example enhancing participation in their communities. The prioritisation in the mission statement of protecting ‘the community’ is also indicative of broader shifts towards advanced liberal strategies of crime control (Feeley and Simon 1992; Garland 2001). Similarly, the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* broadly outlined its commitment to

children's needs and rights, but immediately added a proviso: '...this work will be carried out in a way that is attentive to society's responsibility to the victims of criminal behaviour and community safety. Restorative justice practices will be promoted and facilitated' (IYJS, 2008a:6). The need to promote community safety was also reasserted by Brendan Smith, Minister for Children at the time, in his opening speech to the first Biennial Youth Justice Conference in 2008:

'I am convinced that the successful implementation of the National Youth Justice Strategy will lay the foundations for ensuring that, working in partnership, our youth justice system continues to develop in line with best practice internationally and, most importantly, we can together build a safer society' (Smith, 2008).

The concern placed on community safety and the corresponding subordination of young people's needs also corresponded with the observation made earlier (see chapter 4) in the context of broader crime prevention policy, that advanced liberal (youth) crime control is not so much concerned with the actual control of crime, but with the government of the moral order (Rose, 2000). This also is apparent in the rationale presented for conducting the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) of the GYDPs and to radically overhaul the projects through the ensuing *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b):

'Youth crime is a significant public policy issue. In a recent Garda Public Attitude Survey respondents rated juvenile crime a major national problem [76%], secondary only to drug related crime and violent crime and rated 'lack of parental control' as a significant cause of crime in Ireland. Primary legislation has attempted to respond to such a concern. The Children Act 2001 (as amended) establishes an overall statutory framework for dealing with troubled children and children in trouble with the law. The Act attempts to reconcile the need to hold young people to account for their offending behaviour, the need to protect the public from offending behaviour and builds upon the viable premise that most young people mature into adulthood and cease offending' (IYJS, 2009b:1).

In addition to attributing importance to youth crime because of concerns related to 'public opinion', rather than young people's needs related to their involvement in offending behaviour, the statement above reframed the Children Act 2001, in a way which suited the exigency of project reform envisaged at the outset of the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b). While

the Children Act 2001 undeniably provided for a legislative framework for children (young people) who are in conflict with the law, it emerged as a response to a longstanding shortcoming on the part of official Ireland to acknowledge children's rights. The core emphasis of the Children Act 2001, was mainly an increased consideration of children's rights and welfare, not primarily that of addressing the public concern of juvenile crime.

### **The absence of positive representations of young people**

Young people were also found to be marginalised in official youth crime prevention and policy discourse, when considering claims that the young person was at the centre of the new youth justice agenda. For example, the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*, only contained one section under the heading 'values', describing the official view of young people. With reference to the Children Act 2001, the National Youth Justice Strategy committed to being:

'... mindful of a child-centred approach to service delivery and outcomes, with the best interests of the child being paramount. Relevant legislation including equality legislation and best practice in relation to child welfare policies will be adhered to in the implementation of the Strategy. In this regard, its implementation is with reference to the rights of the child, addressing their needs and holding them accountable for their actions, while developing their futures in society' (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2008: 6).

I suggest that this listing of relevant legislation as the only description of the official position towards young people is limiting in two ways. First, by referring exclusively to children, it negates the complex and different needs of young people. Second, it excludes more positive and inclusive approaches, which emphasise the overall wellbeing of young people as the final outcome of youth justice policy. While any generic description of children and young people would always include a certain degree of generalisation and oversimplification, it was telling that across the entire contemporary project archive reviewed, no position was taken on how children and young people were *positively viewed*. I argue that positive and empowering images of the young person, particularly the young person who offends, would be essential to any strategy or policy document which claims to be built on a child-centred agenda. An alternative is provided for example by the *An Garda Síochána Youth and Children Strategy 2009-2011* (An Garda Síochána, 2009). While ultimately not radical and not built on

consultation with children and young people, it strikes a fundamentally different tone. In the foreword to the Strategy, young people's role is defined in a very positive and inclusive way, a focus that is largely absent in official youth justice discourse: 'Children and young people are important members of any community and it follows therefore that An Garda Síochána should develop a strategy which recognises their place and role' (An Garda Síochána, 2009: 4). It furthermore states that: 'It recognises the particular challenges children and young people face in our society and seeks to address any behaviour on their part which has an adverse impact on themselves, their peers or the wider community' (An Garda Síochána, 2009:4). Although children and young people here are described in terms of their challenges, the involvement of An Garda is understood in broader terms, as an element towards children and young people's overall development: 'we support an inter-agency and partnership approach to problem solving and we rely on the support and assistance of other stakeholders in helping children and young people to reach their full potential' (An Garda Síochána, 2009:4). The point to highlight here was that the aim of inter-agency partnership was described not in intangible terms such as 'good outcomes' for children or in reference to the improvement of a system per se, but in more positive terms, which emphasises its support for children and young people to reach their full potential.

The absence of positive representations of young people was further reinforced by language which described young people in terms which drew attention to their perceived deficits. It stated that '...their futures in society are being developed' (IYJS, 2008a: 6); as passive subjects who 'receive services' (IYJS, 2010b) and who are monitored through 'active case management' (IYJS 2009b: 51). In addition, young people were also objectified in need of an investment in the context of the advanced-liberal governance regime of the projects: '...what level of input a person might require, i.e. the lower the apparent investment by parents, the higher the required input by the project' (IYJS, 2009b: 55/56).

Similarly, the heavy usage of policing language used for example in the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) in describing young people's offending behaviour and ways of addressing it is questionable and left a stereotypical and negative image of young people. Thus, young people are described as 'targeting licences who they perceive as being less vigilant in terms of examining identification' (IYJS, 2009b: 20) and as 'choosing hard to reach outdoor drinking locations, indoor drinking venues or locations safe within estates on which they live, sometimes facilitated by adults and family members within the neighbourhood' (IYJS, 2009b:

38). As a response, successful projects were described as those which could 'arrest behaviour' at an early stage (IYJS, 2009b: 21) including the strengthening of policing strategies as well as situational and environmental prevention<sup>12</sup>: active monitoring of known drinking locations, confiscation of alcohol, planting 'prickly shrubbery' (IYJS, 2009b: 57). In the same vein, projects are encouraged to 'share tactics and ideas amongst projects' (IYJS, 2009b: 50).

Finally, the exclusion of young people also became visible when looking at young people's participation in youth justice policy formulation as well as GDYP practice more generally. In the case of the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* for example, young people were given a role in its formulation through a consultation led by the OMCYA's office, including consultations with participants of several GYDPs. However, at least from the textual materials available, some critical points could be raised in terms of some of the details of these consultations. This became evident when looking at the short summary of the 'key issues' related to offending and the corresponding measures to reduce the risk of offending emerging from the consultations with young people. What was noticeable was that all but two issues raised by young people (crime perceived as 'fun' by some young people; and the need for more contact between young people in detention and their families) were expressing needs of young people located *outside* the criminal justice system and reaching beyond the defined scope of the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*.<sup>13</sup> Two conclusions can be drawn from this: either that the consultation did not focus specifically enough on the issues relevant to the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*, e.g. issues such as detention, community sanctions, diversion and inter-agency cooperation- which form the central content of the Strategy. Or, that there is little evidence that the *Strategy* as such, is not directly informed by the needs actually specified by young people throughout the consultation process. While a response to the latter point can be identified in the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* in terms of the importance accorded to work by other agencies geared towards those responding to the

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<sup>12</sup> Situational and environmental crime prevention are based on a conservative model of crime prevention (White, 1996) and mainly involve interventions aimed at reducing the opportunity of committing crime (e.g. CCTV cameras, increased policing).

<sup>13</sup> These included: depression and stress; family problems (unspecified); lack of support from parents and families; difficulties with doing well at school; lack of recreational facilities; relations between young people and those in authority. Similarly, with regards to the measures that were listed as suggestions to reduce the risk of offending, resulting from the consultations with young people, four out of six are not considered central to the IYJS's mandate as defined by them, such as: equipping young people with education and training; providing more facilities, including recreation; developing parent support programmes; expanding awareness programmes on drug addiction and alcohol abuse, counselling and mental health (IYJS, 2008a: 7).

identified needs of young people, this does throw up the question of the usefulness and authenticity of the consultation process.

Similarly, exclusion of young people also became evident when looking at the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) process. Young people have not been granted a 'voice' in the process of compiling different parts of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) i.e. the literature review or the interviews. While this could as such be justified by the nature of the documents (administrative/managerial) as well as the close relationship of youth workers and young people (who were interviewed extensively as part of the *Baseline Study*), it was indicative of how young people's voices are not prioritised in such an important area of intervention. More concretely for example, the narrative summarised under 'profiles of young people committing offences' (IYJS, 2009b:27) has been completed without talking to young people, resulting in profiles (see Appendix 8) that focus on overt behaviours by young people, neglecting underlying motivations as well as socio-economic circumstances or sub-cultural tendencies.

### **Young people and offending behaviour: a measurable quantity**

Unsurprisingly, where young people did gain a presence in contemporary youth crime prevention policy and project discourse was in relation to their (potential) offending behaviour. In line with the logic of advanced liberal youth crime prevention, descriptions throughout official policy discourses were based on the risk-factor prevention paradigm and correspondingly in the search for 'models' which could explain offending behaviour.

Whether explicitly or implicitly, the risk factor prevention paradigm has achieved unquestioned status in official Irish youth crime prevention policy and project discourse, as was evident from its presence across a wide range of policy documents. For example, the consultation document prepared by the National Crime Council in 2002 for the development of the *National Crime Prevention Policy*, suggested that the identification of risk factors should be pursued in the Irish context in the Longitudinal Survey on Children<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* listed as causes of youthful offending the 'risk-factor' package: 'It is generally agreed that poverty, early-school leaving, addiction and inadequate

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<sup>14</sup> The Children's Longitudinal Survey *Growing Up in Ireland* was set up in 2008 by the Irish Government with the view to conduct large scale, longitudinal research on two different cohorts of infants and children, collecting a wide variety of data aimed at supporting evidence-based policy making for children's services.



parenting all contribute in a major way to crime by young people' (IYJS, 2008a:12). In the same vein, the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* further elaborated on the reasons of young people's offending behaviour, stating that young offenders tended to be 'troubled children from families experiencing a range of social difficulties. Anti-social attitudes and a lack of pro-social peer influences are considered some of the factors that influence young people to offend' (IYJS, 2008a:12). Also, the currently ongoing consultation process in preparation of a *White Paper on Crime* (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2009), has adopted the risk factor approach, with reference to its most prominent proponent, David Farrington. Similarly, an entire chapter of the *GYDP Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b), entitled 'individual circumstances of young people engaged with the GYDPs', focused on explicating four different groups of risk factors, including: individual risks, family risks, educational performance and risks associated with neighbourhood. Lastly, the introduction of the YLS/CMI assessment tool as a core feature of new project practice bears witness to the unquestioned status gained by the risk factor prevention approach in official youth crime prevention policy.

Commentators have explained the risk-factor paradigm's political appeal in the achievement of certain symbolic ends (Smith, 2006). It offers the state the opportunity to demonstrate that 'something is being done' in relation to a particular 'problem' and in the context of scarce resources serves as a justification and selection mechanism for the targeting of those resources. In addition, its strengths have also been as its relative simplification, while at the same time eschewing mono-causal explanations of youth crime (O'Mahony, 2009). The latter point seems to be particularly pertinent in the Irish context as it strongly correlates with the corporatist model of youth justice. Acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of youthful offending, opens up ways of responsabilising different actors in the project of youth crime prevention and supports a corresponding move towards early intervention. The Irish Youth Justice Strategy for example stated as one of its task to bring '...together strategically those bodies working with children, especially children at risk so that early intervention can be effective in preventing their possible progression into the criminal justice system' (National Youth Justice Strategy, 2008:12). The same rationale was presented by the Irish Youth Justice Review, conducted in 2005: 'The trend is not to see young offenders as solely the preserve of the criminal justice framework. It is considered that the availability of this broader range of services is an important support structure to any modern youth justice system' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005: 24).

It was notable that wherever the risk-factor paradigm was explained in official project discourse, rhetorical efforts were undertaken to anticipate and pre-empt possible critiques by pointing to seemingly universally accepted research evidence. The adoption of this rhetorical strategy was observable for example through frequent references made to limitations of the risk-factor approach, particularly in relation to its predictive and generalising powers. However, a close analysis of the discussion of these limitations highlighted the 'truth status' which the risk factor paradigm has reached in official policy discourse. This point is illustrated particularly well in the context of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b), which outlined some of the criticisms of the risk factor approach. For example, it pointed out that

'...Practitioners in the field, opponents of this type of research evidence, indeed parents and young people themselves will report that the picture is much more complex combining what have become orthodox risk factors [self, family, peer group, neighbourhood] in a narrative with situational opportunities and the occasional random external force, all of which could have a significant bearing on a young person's capacity to engage in, or extricate themselves from offending behaviour' (IYJS, 2009b: 4).

The *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) then continued to assert that these criticisms had been taken on board, by providing 'local' information or further detailed description of each of these categories as collected through the interviews with project workers and JLOs in their specific local contexts: 'Risk factors were not taken solely at face value in this baseline analysis. Rather, they were considered in the context of what actual challenges such risks present to projects in respect of their attempts to secure improvements with young people' (IYJS, 2009b: 27).

However, given the problematic methodology of the production of the baseline study (discussed above), as well as the 'pseudo-scientific' way of further contextualising the risk factor paradigm through local narratives, the final adaptation of the paradigm as 'unproblematic' (IYJS, 2009b:16) was indicative of the truth status adhered by the risk factor paradigm. Moreover, the adaptation of the risk factor categories based on 'local knowledge' was further perpetuating deficit based discourses of young people. For example, the individual risk factor list focusing on 'psychological' shortcomings was extended to include items such as: short fuse, impulsivity, delayed social and emotional competence, learning difficulty, and also chaotic lifestyles (IYJS, 2009b:28). Being 'active for most of the night and sleeping until late in the day' entered the list of 'localised' risk factors, despite this being a feature of many young people's lifestyles. In addition, the 'localisation' of risk

factors through introducing terms such as having a 'short fuse' appeared so arbitrary and subjective that it detracted from the apparent 'objectivism' which the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) and the adoption of the risk factor approach sought to achieve. Similarly, this was also observable in the attempt to 'quantify' narrative accounts of risk factors by project workers and JLOs, which was again methodologically questionable (IYJS, 2009b:28). Thus, project workers and JLOs were asked to describe their observations with regards to typical sequences of offending behaviour, and these narrative accounts were quantified and compared- although they were based on completely unstructured narratives, as well as subsequently compiled into definitive profiles of 'alcohol and public order offending profiles' (see Appendix 8).

The power-knowledge effect of the risk factor paradigm also became particularly apparent when considering one of its key points of critique, namely the individualising of offending behaviour at the expense of a consideration of wider societal factors (Gray, 2007, 2009 and 2011; Hannah-Moffat, 1999; Kemshall 2008; Mac Donald 2006). A closer look at the risk factors adopted for example in the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) showed that they were *all* formulated with the effect of individualising young people's offending behaviour. Risk factors enumerated in relation to the category of 'educational performance', for example included: 'mixed or poor school performance and discipline problems'. This individualising discourse was also extended to young people's families. For example, 'family risks' enumerated in the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) included: 'drug problems, offending history, chaotic lifestyles, absence of male role model'. But most importantly, even in the case of the explication of a group of risk factors, which could have potentially drawn out some of the structural factors related to youthful offending, their importance was downplayed and in addition reversed:

'... neighbourhood plays little part as a risk in its own right. Indeed, it is more common for the community to represent the injured party; in many cases local project effort is invested in trying to repair the harm caused by a young person's action' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Affairs, 2009:31).

This explication of 'neighbourhood risk factors' was a prime example of how the risk factor approach was applied with a particular twist so as to suit official discourse, as well as evidence of the lack of understanding of what 'neighbourhood' can mean in the context of offending behaviour (Mac Donald et. al 2005). In relation to other factors, enumerated across the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) such as for example 'lack of organic community structures', the responsibility was attributed to young people and their parents (IYJS, 2009b: 37).

In Table 5.1 the risks factors listed across four policy documents are summarised and the corresponding binaries formulated<sup>15</sup>. While this explication of binary opposites did not suggest that young people were understood in such black and white terms, it demonstrated how young people were described continuously with reference to their presumed deficits. It also brought into focus, how the ‘ideal’ young person was imagined: coming from a middle-class background (‘well-to-do’), supported by family, successful in school, etc. Similarly, it also drew attention to the arbitrariness and indefinite scope of certain terminologies, for example what exactly are anti-social attitudes and by whom are they defined?

**Table 5.1: Groups of risk factors and their binary opposites**

<b>Young offenders</b>	<b>Young/lawful citizens</b>
Poor/Socio-economic deprivation	Middle class income and backgrounds
Inadequate parenting/Parents with poor parenting skills	Adequate parents/parents with good parenting skills
Challenging family circumstances (including criminally active relatives)	Families with no significant problems
Disaffected from formal education	Educational Achievers
Low IQ/Street smart	High IQ/Strong intellect
Mental Health problems/ Psychological problems	No mental health problems
Rundown communities	Crime free communities
Drug and alcohol misuse/addiction problems	No addictions
Anti-social attitudes	Pro-social attitudes
Anti-social peer influence	Pro-social peer influence

<sup>15</sup>Table 5. 1 compiles and groups risk factors enumerated in the following documents: Irish Youth Justice Review 2005; National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010; Baseline Study 2009; White Paper on Crime 2010

Young (2011) has appropriately described this process of creating clearly distinguishable categories of people with certain attributes without overtly 'demonising' them as 'liberal othering'. According to him, this was facilitated through 'diminishing' and 'distancing', both elements which could be applied in the discussion of the risk factor paradigm adopted in contemporary youth crime prevention and policy discourses. People described in these categories were described as 'uneducated, uncivilised, irrational... they lack control...' (Young, 2011:64). Their status was therefore diminished and seen as unrelated to wider economic circumstances. 'Distancing' took place through describing and stereotyping an 'underclass', portrayed as: 'feckless, anti-social and criminal: they are the other half of the binary of the responsible, honest, law-abiding citizen (Young, 2011:64).

The same logic of categorising and classifying was further applied in the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) through the creation of 'alcohol related public order offence profiles' (see Appendix 8). These were compiled as a result of the findings of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) with a view to guide projects in their analysis of young people's offending behaviour in their specific localities, while supporting an 'evidence-based logic' (IYJS, 2009b: 43). I suggest that these profiles serve to 'spatialize the gaze of the governors' (Rose, 1999: 36), by drawing attention to very specific ways of conceptualising offending behaviour. Each of the three profiles sought to explain different 'types' of drinking and consequently offending behaviour. Similarly, as with the risk-factor profiling, I suggest that the alcohol and public order profiles also contribute to individualising young people's behaviour. By taking account of 'temporal', 'situational' and 'individual circumstances' (IYJS, 2009: chapter 4) no space is left for conceptualising broader patterns related to young people's offending behaviour. Also, many young offenders' behaviours are not atypical when compare with law abiding young people's behaviours. For example, none of the circumstances described in the profiles mention that many Irish young people drink alcohol to excess. Although it is admitted that the young person's social environment- depending on whether it tolerates or encourages under-age drinking, has an effect on the young person's drinking behaviour- this broader cultural feature is not mentioned. Similarly, all the interventions that the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) suggests should be offered by projects, are targeted at individuals and are not geared towards challenging broader social constraints which negatively impact on these individuals. These are: pro-social modelling techniques and cognitive behavioural approaches, interventions that improve performance at school, etc.

The alcohol and public order offending profiles further reinforce the problems experienced by young people as individual in origin. Again, while the focus placed on the actual offending incidence might appear self-evident, given the crime prevention focus of the projects, the sole focus on factors

surrounding the offending act, rather than the broader and more complicated pathways leading to such decisions by young people, let alone their motivations, serves to further reposition the projects as instruments of crime prevention. As projects are now encouraged to conduct such profiling exercises following the model suggested in the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) projects are now positioned as vehicles to enhance surveillance over young people in their respective neighbourhoods.

### **Governing GYDPs and project workers**

A considerable proportion of contemporary GYDP policy was dedicated to the introduction of 'processes and procedures employed to facilitate the conduct of conduct' (Marston and McDonald, 2006:4) and to institute 'governing at a distance' (Miller and Rose, 2008:34). The analysis shows how three specific tools have been deployed by the IYJS to align project workers and their work practice with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61, see chapter 3). These include: the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) and the process of piloting the envisaged changes; second the introduction of new reporting and administrative formats and third, the provision of specific training and networking initiatives for project workers. To conceptualise the effects of these technologies, the concept of 'pastiche' applied by O'Sullivan (O'Sullivan, 2005:322-323) in his analysis of policy and interventions around disadvantage in Irish educational policy around the year 2000, was particularly useful. Youth work organisations and the personnel involved in the GYDPs were geographically widespread and were found to be diverse in their orientations towards the purpose of the GYDPs (see e.g. Bowden, 2006). They had to be mobilised as 'participants in combating youth crime'. From this perspective, the following analysis shows how the tools deployed can be understood as cultural work facilitated through pastiche. GYDPs and project workers are positioned as participants in the prevention of youth crime in their respective localities through 'avoidance of dissonance and contestation, deferral and dispersal in understanding youth crime prevention, the enjoining of agreement...and the orientation to and facilitation of action' (O'Sullivan, 2005:322).

### **Baseline study and piloting**

A close analysis of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) showed how it held a central role in discursively positioning and 'membershiping' project workers – or youth justice workers (IYJS, 2009c:9), as they are now called- as central participants in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) process. Project workers were accorded a central role in knowledge creation in relation to understanding young

people and their offending behaviour: 'Our model of development consciously encourages local professionals to invest their knowledge and talent to improve the contribution that their project makes to their local community' (IYJS, 2010d: 7). Project workers were further described as contributing 'practice wisdom' to the mix of high quality local data relating to youth crime and their contribution was also highlighted in meeting 'the challenge of sustaining a voluntary relationship. The competence of the project staff member is undoubtedly instrumental in this' (IYJS, 2009c: 50).

However, a closer analysis of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) calls into question the extent to which the diversity of local knowledge was acknowledged. It also shows how the process of conducting the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) and implementing its recommendations through a piloting process was about gaining support from projects and project workers to a pre-set agenda. The *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) served as a tool to clarify to what extent projects had to modify practice to come in line with these new outcomes. Thus, the final report of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) for example suggested that the project statements produced for the purpose of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) were 'useful in indicating how aligned local project activities are to dealing with local patterns of youth crime, what changes may be necessary and what capacity needs might need to be met to improve overall performance' (IYJS, 2009b: 14). This statement revealed how the gathering of information on project work was as much about confirming to what extent the reduction of youth crime was addressed, rather than anything else. This was also confirmed by the actuarialist discourse deployed in describing project workers as 'the largest resource input available to a Garda Youth Diversion Project' (IYJS, 2009b: 14). Following from this, it was suggested that the 'way that project staff use their time is therefore critical' (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009: 49). Second the process itself in compiling the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b), i.e. visiting all projects and conducting semi-structured interviews with local project workers and JLOs, could be interpreted as an attempt to increase workers' interests and motivation to engage in the change process, as well as to convey the newly adopted priorities of the IYJS. Projects were taken through a 'precise intellectual sequence' (IYJS, 2009b: 48) by participating in the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) and what was asked of them was nothing less than 'genuine commitment to introduce the necessary change to bring about improvement for the young people and communities being served' (IYJS, 2009b: 59).

Most importantly however, a significant effect of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) was to outline how project practice would be changed in its entirety, from planning processes to actual work conducted with young people and their families: 'The outcome of the exercise is as much about providing vision that can be clearly articulated from strategic statements of intent to individual transactions between

professionals, young people and their families' (Redmond, 2009: 148). Thus, the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) was also instructive as to what concrete interventions with young people should look like. While the role of youth work practice was indirectly acknowledged through listing interventions such as 'positive reinforcement, promoting new opportunities through practical, experiential and relationship building, personal development' (IYJS, 2009b: 56), their benefit was not unequivocally recognised. The provision of such interventions 'at the very least will do no harm' (IYJS, 2009b: 57).

Rather, examples of interventions with young people highlighted as 'good practice' were those which displayed 'a clear association between the nature of the challenges being encountered and the desired outcomes informed by clear evidence-based logic' (IYJS, 2009b:147). In line with advanced liberal crime control strategies, concrete activities to be undertaken with young people were all exemplary of technologies of 'ethical reconstruction' (Rose, 2000:321). The *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b) thus listed as 'good practice' examples of interventions at GYDPs, those which focus on changing young people's and their parents' subjectivities, through interventions which would for example '...improve young people's reflective ability, develop empathy, improve the young person's motivation to change, challenge parental attitudes and improve parenting effectiveness, improve school outcomes, etc' (IYJS, 2009b: 147).

Similarly to the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b), the piloting process, initiated in July 2009 by the IYJS to roll out the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) can be seen as a further significant effort to membership projects and project workers into the change process. According to an IYJS official, the piloting process had been instituted through following these steps: gathering of evidence, developing hypotheses, outcomes and measurement and finally the introduction of service changes.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in the first phase of the piloting process, five projects were selected based on criteria such as a mean population of young people (i.e. catchment areas of about 10-14,000 young people), regional representation, (2 Dublin projects, 1 in Cork, 2 rural ones), alcohol related offending patterns and strong Garda leadership. These projects then received intensive training and support to implement envisaged changes and to collaboratively develop them further in partnership with the IYJS. Thus, project workers and JLOs were introduced through training to different measurement scales promising to measure young people's impulsivity, empathy and pro-social attitudes. Further, the adaptation of the Canadian developed risk/needs assessment tool YLS/CMI, was another core activity undertaken in the context of the work of the first five trial sites. Finally,

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<sup>16</sup> Interview conducted by the researcher with an Irish Youth Justice Official, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2009.



Garda Headquarters developed detailed analysis of crime data for these first pilot projects to contribute to project workers' preparation of local crime profiles and offending sequences.

In addition to the intensive work undertaken with projects during the first pilot phase, other projects were also involved in a number of training events designed to introduce them to 'pro-social modelling', 'motivational interviewing' and 'ambivalent parents'/Functional Family Therapy. As will be discussed in more detail below, the selection of these training modules was reflective of the notion that solutions to youth offending lie in the remodelling of young people and their parents as well as the involvement of families as a key aspect of 'youth justice work'. At the time of writing, the piloting process has moved into its second phase, with a further 10 projects participating and the tested changes, such as the YLS/CMI, being rolled out across all projects. Overall, the piloting process could be interpreted as a strategy to ensure buy-in across projects. The level of success of this strategy is evident in some project workers' reactions to their involvement in the pilot process, presented in chapter 7. The piloting process was seen by some project workers as an investment in the projects and participation therein as 'success'.

### **Training and networking**

Two tools introduced as part of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), i.e. the provision of specific training modules and the online 'Learning Forum' for project workers served to mould project workers with the new agenda of advanced liberal youth crime prevention. This was made evident in the selection of training offered to all project workers during the first phase of the *Agenda for Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). These training modules were all focused on how to achieve the 'ethical reconstruction' of individual offenders and their families (Gray 2007; Rose, 2000:321). For example, the training offered on 'Motivational interviewing' focused on affecting change 'from within the person' (IYJS, 2011d: 4). Project workers were trained to support individuals in helping themselves to become 'ready, willing and able to do something' (IYJS, 2011d: 4). Through using the techniques of motivational interviewing, their application sought to appeal to the 'rational individual, so that she can recognise 'the disadvantages of the status quo....and...the advantages of change' (IYJS, 2011d: 4).

Similarly, the training project workers received on 'pro-social modelling', was based on the same rationale. It borrowed from a set of social work practices with 'involuntary clients' (Trotter, 1999). The training programme sought to encourage project staff to establish positive relationships with

their 'clients', (the term for young people used in this context), to model positive behaviour and reinforce the young person in their efforts towards achieving positive behaviour, while also challenging their 'anti-social behaviour'. The programme also set out to train young people in 'problem solving' by setting SMART goals, i.e. 'specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound' goals (IYJS, 2011b).

Finally, project workers were also introduced to core principles of 'Functional Family Therapy' (FFT) to facilitate 'their understanding of the applicability of these techniques to youth work' (IYJS, 2011g). FFT was founded in 1972 by psychologist James F. Alexander in the United States. In simplest terms, it is based on family systems theory and seeks to apply 'cognitive behavioural intervention strategies to the ecological formulation of the family disturbance' (ISU, 2011). The appeal of FFT seems to be its resonance with the evidence-based discourse of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), as can be read in the handout, project staff received as part of their training programme on FFT:

'The program applies a comprehensive model, proven theory, empirically tested principles, and a wealth of experience to the treatment of at-risk and delinquent youth. Thirty years of clinical research indicate that FFT can prevent the onset of delinquency and reduce recidivism at a financial and human cost well below that exacted by the punitive approaches noted earlier' (IYJS, 2011g).

This extension of project work to include family therapy arguably represented a shift from traditional youth work practice and signified what Donzelot (1980:97) referred to as an 'infrastructure of prevention', built around children, young people and their families (Donzelot, 1980:97). In addition, this extension of project work to include young people's families was framed in advanced liberal terms, reflective of wider youth crime prevention discourses. Thus, the justification to attribute central importance to 'family factors', was offered by drawing on 'research evidence' and implemented through the introduction of measures aimed at improving 'parenting effectiveness' with 'sufficient dosage to effect attitude change' (IYJS, 2009b: 51).

Further, the relationship between parents and young people was described in actuarialist language: '...what level of input a person might require, i.e. the lower the apparent investment by parents, the higher the required input by the project' (IYJS, 2009b: 55/56). Similarly parents and families' problems were for the most part isolated from their lives in social, economic and cultural context. Thus, while for example 'indifference' by parents towards their children's behaviour was explained

as being ‘possibly related to the sense of overwhelming stress that many parents face’ (IYJS, 2009b: 30) no mention was made as to *why* such stresses occur in the particular families targeted by the projects. Similarly to how young people are described through the creation of risk profiles and alcohol and public order offending profiles, the categorisation of parental responses to their children’s behaviour in five categories<sup>17</sup>, arguably was again reflective of a process of ‘liberal othering’ and an attempt to decrease ‘ontological insecurity’<sup>18</sup> (Young, 2011: 64).

The *Online Learning Platform* was reportedly set up with a view to facilitate ‘an ongoing dialogue and the cultivation of a learning community amongst providers of Garda Youth Diversion projects to improve practice and share knowledge’ (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009:61). Access to the learning platform is limited to project staff, JLOs and the Irish Youth Justice Service. Unfortunately, I was not permitted to gain temporary access to the site, which makes any conclusions about the platform difficult.<sup>19</sup> However, I did gain some insight from what interviewees said about the online learning platform. These revealed how some project workers were reluctant to use it, as they felt their contributions were monitored and assessed.

### **Reporting and auditing**

The third and final tool introduced by the Irish Youth Justice Service to institute the changed focus related to reporting and auditing requirements. A considerable emphasis throughout the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was placed on making projects more accountable to the IYJS. This process was significantly bolstered by the introduction of new elements introduced in the reporting and auditing formats to be prepared by the projects. Thus, the most significant feature of the new annual plan format introduced in 2010, was the requirement for projects to include a detailed preparation of crime statistics for the respective project catchment area, including recorded incidents of youth crime, drawing on PULSE<sup>20</sup> information. It was stated that: ‘Only when this exercise has been

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<sup>17</sup> These categories were described as: parents lacking parenting effectiveness; parents concerned and possibly angry at the young person’s offending behaviour; parents who minimise offending behaviour; parents who are indifferent; parents who are culpable in encouraging young people’s offending behaviour (IYJS, 2009b: 30).

<sup>18</sup> In volatile or fluid environments such as the GYDPs, project workers are unsure of their identities and thus look for ways how to reach a sense of clarity by different means, such as describing problem categories, neatly fitting interventions to those, reporting on outcomes, etc.

<sup>19</sup> With my research objectives in mind, it would have been interesting to see what type of resource materials are posted on the site by the IYJS for sharing with project workers.

<sup>20</sup> PULSE (Police Using Leading Systems Effectively) is a computer system used by An Garda Síochána and was introduced in November 1999 to record and store criminal records of individuals. Importantly, the Diversion Programme database was integrated with PULSE in 2010.

completed satisfactorily will the draft plan be adopted by the Irish Youth Justice Service and An Garda Síochána' (IYJS, 2010c:2).

These descriptive statistics also have to be complemented by a 'narrative' on youth crime, based on the type of information provided in the alcohol and public order offending profiles (see Appendix 8) produced as a result of the *Baseline Study* (IYJS, 2009b). A detailed section of the *Annual Plan Explanatory Notes* gave examples of how the 'narrative on youth crime' could be presented. It was notable that all examples presented therein utilised the language of risk and retold a similar narratives which placed no emphasis on broader aspects of young people's lives or indeed their strengths. The narratives of project workers and JLOs on young people's offending behaviour (see Chapter 8) effectively demonstrate how knowledge promoted at policy level travelled to projects and how demands for certain types of information informed how young people were talked about. This is exemplary of the Foucauldian power-knowledge relationship so often revealed in this study. The new annual plan format also demanded that projects be much more explicit and deliberative in linking their activities and intended outcomes with the aim to reduce crime in the given catchment area, and this was also a condition for funding:

'The Irish Youth Justice Service will require as a condition of funding that all 2010 Annual Plans for existing Garda Youth Diversion Projects and business plans for applicant local areas contain a detailed logic statement identifying specifically what improvements the project intends to make to the local youth crime situation... 2010 business plans will need to demonstrate a clear link between the analysis of local youth crime and the project's rationale for selecting activities to improve the situation' (IYJS, 2009b: 59).

Another requirement for projects was to outline in tabular form how each intended activity would contribute to different outcomes. Standardised referral forms (IYJS, 2011: i), which assign a unique identification number to the young person referred, as well as details such as ethnic background and reasons for referral.

Most importantly however, this information is to be accompanied by a YLS/CMI-score value (*Youth Level Service/Case Management Inventory*) score. This risk assessment tool, developed in Canada, has been recommended for adoption across the Irish youth justice sector, as result of a literature review commissioned by the IYJS in 2008 (IYJS, 2010d: 11).<sup>21</sup> Projects are not required to supply young people's individual scores, but the total score of all young people and their mean score, based on the number of participants.

From the materials reviewed above, I would suggest that all of these measures were introduced to better monitor what individual projects were doing in detail and to uncover how 'well-aligned' they are to the implementation of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) . The *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) is thus as much about 'governing those who govern' than it is about introducing new ways of working with young people. This was also confirmed in the elaboration of the annual plan requiring projects to outline their activities vis-a-vis concrete crime reduction targets: 'The data from this section will assist IYJS in comparing suggested activities and improvements with attempts being made in other parts of the GYDP network and auditing these attempts against emerging practice in the relevant research literature' (IYJS, 2011j: 8).

## Conclusion

This chapter has sought to critically analyse the main discourses emerging in official Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP project discourse. Throughout, this chapter sought to outline the ways in which contemporary youth crime prevention policy and project discourse act as 'textual sites of power' (Moss and Petrie, 2002:98). Through repetition of certain discourses based on identifiable assumptions, particular kinds of knowledge become established as 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1976) with demonstrable effects of power. The analysis has shown how the centralisation of leadership and the concurrent responsibilisation of partners and GYDPs have been achieved both institutionally as well as discursively to form central themes in contemporary youth crime prevention policy. Both these elements are representative features of corporatist youth justice systems and what thus emerged in both these discourse strands was the emphasis placed on improved systems more than anything else. The analysis further demonstrated how different elements of actuarialist discourses were strongly present across official youth crime prevention and policy discourses. A

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<sup>21</sup> More concretely, the score is a composite of information on these factors: history of conduct disorder; current school of employment problems; some antisocial friends; alcohol/drug problems/leisure/recreation issues; personality/behavioural problems; family circumstances/parenting issues; attitudes/orientation problems.

close interrogation of statements and assumptions made, revealed how the themes of evidence-based decision making and of effectiveness achieved unquestioned status, despite at times failing to live up to their own claims of objectivity and reliability. Official policy and project discourses were shown to marginalise young people discursively and they exercised no role in the formation of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Furthermore I sought to highlight how young people and their offending behaviour was across youth crime prevention policy, but very specifically also in official project discourse, sought to be understood through the creation of 'models'. Here, Young's observation was helpful for understanding the emphasis placed on the interest in categorisations and typologies: 'Ontological insecurity gives rise to a desire for clear-cut delineations, and for othering: it generates a binary of those in society and those outside of it, which is seen to correspond to the normal, on the one side, and the deviant and criminal on the other' (Young, 2011:64). As the analysis suggested, the adoption of these models and categorisations had several effects. It added legitimacy to contemporary policy and project discourse by presenting promoted knowledge as 'objective' and 'neutral'. Young peoples' offending behaviour was cut adrift from its broader societal contexts. The 'ideal' young person was defined and measured against the 'troubled' or 'troublesome' young person. Finally, this chapter has shown how throughout official policy and project discourse, individualising interventions with young people were promoted. This chapter also demonstrated in detail how official project discourse introduced several tools aimed at governing project workers and by so doing sought to redirect the priorities of the projects.

## Chapter 6

### A critical analysis of working with young people in the context of the GYDPs

#### Introduction

One of the central research questions of this thesis was to identify the extent to which GYDP discourse and practice in its construction of the 'youth justice worker' was moving away from some of the fundamentals of youth work, which significantly oriented GYDP practice from the outset. To engage with this question, this chapter traces which discourses project workers and JLOs draw upon in constructing their practice with young people. More specifically, in this chapter I identify whether one can speak of the emergence of 'youth justice work' as a particular professional practice in the Irish context. Given the heritage and strong presence of the voluntary youth work sector, as well as of project workers with a youth work background in the GYDPs, this chapter contributes to the debate pertaining to the involvement of youth agencies in the GYDPs, an intervention characterised by a very distinct set of political rationales. Since the early 1990s, the participation of Irish youth work organisations in state-led agendas, such as crime reduction, became an increasingly accepted practice in the form of 'targeted' youth work provision. However, the involvement of youth workers and youth-work organisation in state-led agendas continues to be a matter of ongoing debate both internationally as well as in the Irish context (see chapter 3). These debates place into contention the very idea that working with young people based on youth work principles is possible in contexts such as the GYDPs. Banks (2010) response to this ongoing debate, offers a starting point for the questions analysed in the chapter. She suggested that a response would depend on 'how youth work is defined, what are thought to be the core values of the work, and how these values are interpreted and implemented' (Banks, 2010:8). In this chapter - by analysing project workers' and JLOs' discursive constructions of their principles and practices of work with young people - I will consider how project workers and JLOs mobilise, alter, subvert or re-contextualise some of the dominant discourses identified in contemporary youth crime prevention policy, as well as those discourses in which core principles of youth work practice are evolved. As is made clear, the analysis presented in this chapter commenced with an attempt to juxtapose several youth work principles with demands made on professionals by official GYDP policy and to identify how project workers and JLOs located themselves in relation to these. What emerged in the analysis and what is presented here, is a nuanced and layered picture where individual project workers and JLOs combined different elements of

sometimes contradictory discourses and practices. It is the post-structuralist framework in which this thesis is located, which allowed for the analysis to highlight such contradictory practices and discourses as well as to question some seemingly 'progressive' ones. Finally, by deconstructing some of the terminology often drawn upon in relation to working with young people in the GYDPs, this chapter seeks to offer a critical reflection of what sometimes is presented as unquestioningly 'progressive' practice.

### **Setting priorities in youth crime prevention**

The reduction of young people's offending behaviour has always been the main official focus of the GYDPs. However as shown in Chapter 3, the demand placed on projects to directly contribute to reducing youth crime in respective localities has intensified since the introduction of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). These changes have been facilitated in several ways, for example through the requirement of preparing project programme and activities based on PULSE statistics, through the demand to demonstrate the link between project activities and their contribution to crime reduction, and the increasing focus on 'primary referrals', i.e. those young people who have been cautioned under the Diversion Programme. This shift has been further promoted through both discursive and material practices with the purpose to aligning GYDPs and project workers to the priority of youth crime reduction, through 'membershopping' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 59) them as partners into the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), and by 'enjoining agreement' (O'Sullivan, 2005:323) through several discursive and rhetorical strategies (see Chapter 5). Specifically in relation to defining project objectives and outcomes, the question analysed in the following section is whether room remains for project workers to focus on young people's individual needs and place them at the core of their practice, rather than approach the work with pre-determined goals and outcomes, in this case the reduction of offending behaviour. Throughout this analysis, it is possible to define more clearly the ways in which project workers and JLOs have been 'responsibilised' into official youth crime prevention discourse and if and how there is discursive and practice spaces remaining for putting young people and their individual needs at the core of projects' agendas.



## Defining project objectives

An analysis of project workers' and JLOs' responses to the question as to how they would personally define the overall objective of the GYDPs showed a duality of responses across roughly equal lines. First, there were those project workers and JLOs who in offering their definition of project objectives more or less subscribed to the official project objectives of reducing offending behaviour. This was reflected in the high level of consistency between definitions offered by project workers and the official project objectives. Notably, the official project objective of reducing offending was most strongly supported by those project workers and JLOs who were positive about the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). In these accounts, the reduction of offending behaviour was placed at the centre of project objectives, and project workers' and JLOs' responses did not point to any ambivalence with regards to these. Claire for example, whose project was also part of the first pilot phase and who was generally agreeable with the recent policy developments, offered this definition of the project's overall aim:

I suppose the overall purpose of the project really is to divert young people from getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour and it's to divert those already involved and then I suppose to prevent others from actually becoming involved.

Similarly, Patrick, who throughout the interview evaluated the increasing involvement of the IYJS as exclusively positive, defined the core of his work in unison with the project's official objectives:

To prevent young people to be involved in crime, you know, and people that...young people that are currently involved in criminal activities to reduce this, you know, that would be...it's the key thing at the moment for us, you know, if anything, that's really my work.

This is not to say that project workers and JLOs viewed the projects as only impacting on offending behaviour and not on other areas of their lives, as can be seen from James's (a JLO) explication of project objectives.

I suppose the overall objective of the project is quite simple. It's to reduce crime. Reduce juvenile offending and I suppose to make, to improve the quality of the young person's life, okay....But the overall aim is to reduce offending, to keep young people out of court.

James' s response indicates how improving the quality of life for a young person is an objective, but is less of a priority than reducing offending. By immediately adding a disclaimer to his statement relating to the priority of 'improving the quality of the young person's life', he re-assigned central importance to the reduction of offending, vis-a-vis other objectives.

In contrast, other project workers and JLOs who were notably more concerned about the role of the voluntary youth work sector in the GYDPs and in the case of JLOs who had a good understanding of the broader role of youth work, took a more differentiated view on defining project objectives. Project worker Matthew for example when asked to state the project's objectives immediately referred to what he positioned as a tension between youth practice work on the one hand and youth crime prevention and diversion on the other.

The overall objective of the project and that's not as easy as you think. The youth diversion project is to divert young people away from crime... but what has become of late is to tackle the crime. And our Youth Service would need to engage young people in a positive way and show that there are alternatives to their, maybe to their antisocial behaviour and I suppose for me personally is to engage with young people in a positive way, give them an outlook, giving them a positive outlook and give them self belief.

At the end of his statement, Matthew added his personal ('I suppose for me personally') view on projects' objectives, and in doing so, shifted the focus of the official demand to reduce crime towards what could be described as relationship building towards self-esteem. In doing that, Matthew invokes what would typically be described as one of the core features of youth work, and which as I have shown in Chapter 5, is sidelined in official project discourse. Also Oliver's definition of project objectives focuses not on the reduction of youth crime, but on the importance of personal development and adherence to youth work principles. Oliver was also one of the project workers consistently asserting a youth work identity throughout the interview and was most critical of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61).

First thing so, I would say the overall objective of the project is to support young people in whatever it is they're going through so, staying true to youth work principles... So, I'd say like, if we happily stay within personal development and stay true to that, I'd be happy with that.

In relation to defining project objectives, a relatively clear boundary emerged to distinguish project workers and JLOs who were arguably implicated in the 'truth regime' of youth crime prevention. At least discursively, they participated as co-producers in the 'major political project' of youth crime prevention (France and Utting, 2005), by reiterating official project objectives. In relation to the broader project of prevention as a phenomenon of modernity, Freeman (1999) suggested that it was signified through a 'high level of rhetorical agreement' across the political spectrum, which in this case was observable across a range of project workers and JLOs, i.e. across different professional groups. In contrast, it was interesting to observe, that some project workers took the opportunity at the outset of the interviews to articulate their unease with the demands placed upon them and their backgrounds in youth work.

### **Defining successful outcomes**

The distinction between responses of those who were more strongly anchored in youth work discourse and those more aligned with official project discourses became increasingly blurred when looking at how project workers and JLOs described successful project outcomes. First, the very large majority of interview participants, including JLOs, drew on different elements of youth work discourse in describing successful project outcomes. These can be broadly described under the heading of 'personal development' and a variety of patterns emerged here. Several project workers expressed modest expectations relating to project success and the achievement of certain social skills. These included attending activities as agreed, increased communication skills, and making considered personal decisions, as indicators of 'success'. Project worker Gina for example gave an illustration of how simple positive behavioural changes demonstrated 'around the pool table' would be defined as a significant project achievement.

Even the pool here, they sign in and, you know, if they want to play pool, when we started here first, they were calling each other names and they weren't sharing, there

was no clean up... we're actually getting there now and even, you know, if they come in they pay for their pool. It's fifty cents. They now know they have to say please and thank you. You know even with the small things...To us, that's a great success yeah.

Examples such as the one provided by Gina can be found in many accounts of youth work practice, where activity based personal development forms a central core of practice. Similarly, Nancy defines project success as a facet of personal development, in this case, young people making considered decisions and choices in their lives.

What always gets me is a young person making decisions for themselves. When a young person comes into me and telling me, 'Right, I've decided to do this and this is why...You know, that's enough for me in the day like and you do not get that every day but...That's what makes me happy.

Similarly, project worker Davina, in her response to what she would define as success in his work drew upon a discourse entirely different from official youth crime prevention discourse.

A young person going to bed at night knowing that they're a worthwhile individual. You can't measure that because you can't go there and ring him up like, 'How do you feel? Brilliant. Job done' But if the young person goes to bed at night, feeling like a worthwhile individual, then... then, that's good.

In this instance, a projects' success is relayed which makes absolutely no reference to reduced offending, but rather emphasises the importance of personal development. In her response, she also referred implicitly and critically to the broader youth crime prevention policy and project discourse of 'evidence-based' interventions, and how his definition of success is not amenable to this kind of measurement. It was noteworthy, that in the majority of these accounts, the reduction of offending behaviour was not mentioned.

Second, interview participants frequently stated that the definition of 'success' was dependent on each individual young person, their interests and needs, resonating with the principle of the centrality of young people's individual needs or 'starting where the young person is at', a core youth work principle. Rachel, a JLO, for example, who was involved on one of the pilot projects, provided a very nuanced and modest definition of success as that which recognised

the positive behaviours being demonstrated by the child, even if the offending and problematic behaviours were also present.

I would have no hard and fast rule there...so again, most of the work that we do as JLOs is individual based so it is based on the interests of the child... so everything is how that particular child is getting on so if lots of things are going right with that child and he is doing a lot of things that are positive, yeah, we will accentuate that ... we push that, push that, push that, but it could happen that he is also doing stuff. He might still be smoking pot, he might still be misbehaving and there might be still anti-social issues, he might have issues with the guards or whatever but he is still wide open, he is still trying to accentuate the positive and sort of lay down the negative but it is done on an individual basis.

It was notable that several JLOs drew on this element typically associated with youth work. Possibly, this might be seen as an indication of the sometimes underestimated presence and impact of youth work amongst other professions or wider society (see Devlin and Gunning, 2009). Alternatively, it could also be interpreted as a core value found across caring professions, such as social work, but also probationary and JLO work.

Third, reference to an increased skills base, staying in school or completing some sort of education or getting a job, was a theme which very frequently emerged in definitions of project's success. Unsurprisingly, it was mentioned by every single 'second worker', given their remit to increase young people's 'employability' as outlined in the official definition of project objectives.<sup>1</sup> But also other project workers and JLOs highlighted school attendance and access to second chance education as project success. Matthew for example defines evidence of educational ambition as a successful result of project work:

But like we have all the young people now, even in second year and third year and some of these young people in second year have literacy problems and they're planning what their college course is going to be. So, they start to aim higher. That's

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<sup>1</sup> After all, GYDPs are officially defined as 'community based, multi-agency youth crime prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people who have been involved in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development, promote civic responsibility and improve long-term employability prospects' (IYJS, 2010c: 2).

the big success for me is that they're starting to look at the future, 'You know, I'd like to do that'.

The strong reference to education and skills emerged throughout the interviews at different points (i.e. as a 'risk factor' for offending behaviour and as a possible solution to offending behaviour), and is also indicative of the value placed upon the 'entrepreneurial self' (Kelly, 2006) in relation to societal expectations of young people more generally.

Notably, the lines between the project workers more strongly anchored in 'youth work discourses' and those who were more agreeable with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), shifted when looking at definitions of project success. This happened as project workers and JLOs, generally supportive of official youth crime prevention discourse, extended the official definition to reduce youth crime, to encapsulate their professional and personal definitions of success. This outcome was indicated by respondents differentiating between what they described as the 'official position', and their own personal definitions of success. For example, Max, who welcomed the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) very positively, formulated more modest and grounded indicators of success, in addition to the official goal of reduced offending rates.

I think there is the official line which is about reduced offending in the community, but I think on a more grounded level ... success for us is for a young person coming in and feeling supported. Supported in making change and identifying that they need change. And for some young people that might be that they start going back to school. That they start talking to a parent. That a relationship with a peer develops you know, or they have prepared a CV in terms of looking for work. Sometimes it's those things that you can't measure that are so small that they just feel that somebody would listen to them.

Similarly, Laura, a JLO, directly referred to what she thought she was expected to say in her official role, but also added different criteria of success based on her own experience.

Well I suppose as a guard, I would have to say reduction in offending would be top of the scale but at the same time, I think from the youth perspective, if they have somewhere safe to go and someone to talk to that they can trust, I think that's a huge

benefit. Whether the offending behaviour reduces or not, but even if it just changes, if it goes from like assaults, you know to public order...

The discussion around the definition of 'success' in the context of the GYDPs also contained several very critical remarks. Some project workers highlighted how they were not clear on what were considered 'successful' outcomes in terms of the projects. Sophie for example who was reflective but not overly critical of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), pointed out the lack of clarity in relation to definitions of 'success'. She also refers to what she perceives as a disjuncture between official definitions of success and her own:

A success for myself and the project is... they are two different things. Like, I have success if the young person opens up to you. Success is when the young person can look at and see what they're doing, and say yeah, you know, I've been doing this for years. It's wrong. Success is when they can look at their behaviour and make changes. So we as a project though, I find it very hard to measure outcomes and to measure success.

Those project workers who were continuously vocal about the challenges they faced as youth workers in the context of the GYDPs, made this tension between official demands in relation to success and their personal definitions, informed by youth work principles, explicit.

Project worker Oliver, for example pointed out how the demands placed on projects to plan their programmes and activities according to local crime statistics and with clear reference to reducing offending behaviour, was contradictory to working with young based on their defined needs. As a consequence, he defined 'success' as staying true to her professional principles, which were grounded in youth work discourse and not sacrificing these in the service of another agenda.

So, I think that that's quite hard to say like across the board cause it just like, like young people are such individuals and I suppose that's why it irritates me as well and when they give a...when they're saying 'oh look up the crimes statistics' and then base your programmes on these because, there might be ten young people who all have a public order offences, but for each of those young people the reality is very different...and if I'm listening to them, if I feel like I'm giving them the support that

they need, if I'm not meeting my own agenda or some other agenda, and if I'm just like a safe adult and giving them a safe space that's my aim.

Similarly, Matthew- a strong critic of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) - made the tension between official demands and youth work informed practice explicit. He juxtaposed the requirements of 'them' – the Irish Youth Justice Service- with what project workers –'us'- experienced on the ground.

So, like I suppose they want crime figures. They want the guards to tie in, whereas we have a young person here who was committing offences but was also suicidal and he was also dropping out of school and we're getting them back to doing leaving cert. They're getting counselling. They're not as suicidal as they were and they have got lots of support around them now. But they might say, I'm going out on a Friday night and getting drunk, the Gardai will come along and take their name for whatever reason and they're back in the system.

Despite this variety of accounts in terms of defining official project objectives and successes, the common emphasis on 'personal development' was notable. This can be seen as a reflection of broader official youth work discourses and practices in the Irish context, where perspectives focusing on social education have appeared only shortly in official policy discourse (see Costello 1985 report) and in practice always played a minor role (see Devlin 1989; Kiely 2009). But it is also indicative of the wider construction of young people as individuals responsible for developing their personalities and skills, so that they can better negotiate and manage their lives (Kelly, 2006). In this context, Broom's (2008) observation in relation to prevention in public health seems pertinent. She suggested that 'hazards are particularly acute in the absence of a reflexive and critical awareness of the political environment and the cultural economy within which prevention occurs'. This critical awareness of the political environment and cultural economy was notably absent in professionals' discourses when they defined the objectives of Garda Youth Diversion Projects and articulated the measures of success.



## **Young people's voluntary participation**

Young people's voluntary participation in the GYDPs has remained a central feature until today and is reflective of the project's youth work heritage. The most recent GYDP operational guidelines (IYJS, 2009c) reasserted that young people's participation in the projects is voluntary for both 'primary' and 'secondary' referrals. Correspondingly, there are usually no forms of contracts that young people sign up to, in order to participate in the GYDPs. Equally, although young people's details in relation to the Diversion Programme are recorded in the PULSE system, this is not the case with the GYDPs. Project workers are accorded a central role by the IYJS in meeting '...the challenge of sustaining a voluntary relationship' (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009b: 50). The analysis of interview findings confirmed that the principle of 'voluntary participation' is very strongly held by many project workers and also for some JLOs in defining the very nature of working with young people on the GYDPs. Peter, a JLO, for example explained how referral to the GYDPs could not be a condition linked to the caution administered under the Juvenile Diversion Programme:

They [the caution and the referral to the GYDP] work hand in hand. We have to get agreement then though, you know, we can't say as part of your caution, you have to go and get involved in the project.

JLO Kieran provided good insight into how a referral to a project might work in practice, by telling a story about a young person he encountered and encouraged to participate in a GYDP:

Well, for example, now. We had a referral there last week with project worker X, and I had one particular guy in a serious situation at the moment on the outskirts of location X. And I said to project worker X: would you do a bit of work with him? He's fifteen years of age, hanging out with fellows, maybe twenty and twenty-one. And I went up to the house then afterwards, and I said 'Look, project worker X will call out to you. I would like you to get involved with the project.'.....so project worker X will try to work with him. And you'd be hoping that he will cop on.....

Project worker Niamh highlighted that 'voluntary participation' was at the core of project practice and in this way challenged the view that the GYDPs are different from other youth work projects.

I would say that it's [the work done on the projects] youth work because I wouldn't want people to think that the young people are sent to us, because it is a voluntary project. It is up to young people to come here ... they're not under court order to come, so I would say that it is youth work.

As an indicator of the voluntary relationship between project workers and young people, project workers described in several instances, how young people were free to leave the project at any time and how this increased the pressure on workers to engage young people in a dialogue to enable them to define their own needs and interests. Nancy for example, explained how the pace and nature of the work was determined by the young person attending.

Well, it's [young people's voice] always been quite loud in fact ... they'll try a group and they'll say 'Ah its shit, I don't want to go to that' you know. It's open enough for them to do that, which can be very tricky because we're not overly forceful but we'd rather have them here and try a few things rather than be forced to do something and then leave.

In many instances, project workers also highlighted what could be described as 'negotiated participation', a term commonly referred to in youth work discourse (Davies and Merton, 2009:12). Certain parts of the programmes were 'obligatory' (usually sessions focused on behavioural change) and some other activities preferred or chosen by young people served as incentives for doing these 'obligatory activities'. Davina for example drew upon the 'carrot' and 'stick' metaphor, in describing how the balance was struck between 'fun' activities and those which were more directly geared at behavioural change.

A lot of what we do is 'what you want to do, what are your interests' and we work it all out and then we go we can do, A, B, C, but not D. But if we do these two other things then we can have this carrot at the end too...so it's all about compromising and everything.

However, in some of these descriptions of negotiated participation, the tone started to shift towards a more authoritarian discourse in relation to young people. Both Aaron and his colleague, Una, highlighted how participation in 'behavioural programmes' in their project was

compulsory, while they also noted that 'none of them [the young people] like to come to the behavioural programme'. These meetings were usually held on a weekly basis and facilitated by both project workers. They included different elements designed to challenge the problematic behaviours through discussions, role-plays and other exercises.

We'd sit down. When I meet with a young person, I sit down and we'd talk about, we get information first and then I'd say, 'This is really what we need to do here.' If there's a drug and alcohol issue, I'd say, 'If you're going to be involved in this project, I'm referring you to a drug and alcohol service to be assessed.' And they have a choice if they go or not. But they don't have choice in my referral. My referral is gone.

In the statement above, project worker Aaron, takes on the role of a diagnostician, who after obtaining basic information pursues a definite course of action, participation in which by the young person is linked to whether he or she continues to participate in the project. This bears evidence of the differential power relationship that can be exerted between project workers and young people and a resistance on the part of the project worker towards troubling 'our' ways of knowing (Kelly, 2007) what might be in the best interests of young people.

The presence of a de-facto unequal power relationship between project workers, JLOs and young people also became evident in several other statements relating to young people's participation in the projects. JLO Fiona's account for example highlighted how the participation of young people in the projects was encouraged, with the potential 'threat' of going to court looming in the background:

Well I would say like this, like, they're involved with being cautioned once or twice, I'd say, 'I have to recommend certain things in place maybe for you to be considered to be cautioned again and what I am recommending is you attend the project.' So, they go on with that very quick because they don't want to go to court, you understand that, but it's not a thing that I'd be pushing on them but I would refer them, they come down here.

Some project workers and JLOs also suggested that compulsory attendance might be a route to be considered in the further development of the projects. Gavin, a JLO, for example, who was otherwise very much aware of the value of voluntary participation, suggested that compulsory participation might be necessary for some young people: 'For some guys, there

has to be something that makes it...that's compulsory because otherwise, they just do whatever they want.'

In fact some project workers observed that as the Garda Diversion Programme moved towards restorative practices, participation in the GYDPs was increasingly being included as a condition or activity incorporated into young people's agreements as part of the cautioning process. This is a breach of the official guidelines as well as the principles of voluntary participation, viewed by some interviewees to be so important. Project worker Gina remarked:

You know, a young person doesn't have to attend the Garda diversion project if he doesn't want to, but see what seems to be happening and seems to be coming up now I think is that, when they're doing the restorative part of it, they're sort of, they make it a part of their agreement that they did the Garda Project.

Project worker Aaron's account of voluntary participation also gave insight into the implications for a young person if or he or she chose not to attend or to positively engage:

I do explain our role and then I do explain that it's voluntary. However, I always say, 'But it's voluntary. But if you get into any trouble again, the JLO is going to ring me again and say, 'How did little Johnny get on in the project? Is he attending this?' or 'Have you seen improvement?' And if I say that little Johnny would be running off, what would I say to them? Or little Johnny didn't really want to come or he's not interested to be honest or he'd say little Johnny couldn't give a crap ... So it's always voluntary but, there's always a but, and I think they need to be told that.

The increasing linkage of the projects with the Diversion Programme, partly through linking it to conditions provided for as part of the caution administered, is also reflective of the broader shift in GYDP policy, where the increasing linkage of projects with the Diversion Programme has taken centre stage on the policy agenda. Projects are increasingly bound up with the formal Garda Diversion Scheme in a 'network of governance'. Aaron's account of his collaboration with the JLO raises important issues in this regard.

Well the JLO will kind of say 'you [project worker] have to go and see him [young person] and we'll review him in five weeks'. Guys have come and they haven't. Or 'I'm referring you to Aaron and you have to be there for next nine months. I'll review it.'

Aaron's account recalls how project participation is reviewed by the JLOs as part of the supervision under the caution process, administered in the context of the Diversion Programme. JLOs under the supervision of the Director of the Diversion Programme usually decide the level of support offered to the young person (Children Act 2001, s.28(1) & (2)). The discussion and critique of the shortcomings and risks of the Diversion Programme, particularly in relation to young people's rights to due process, have been raised in relation to the Programme, however they have not been considered with reference to the GYDPs.<sup>2</sup> The important question which arises from project workers' observation is how GYDPs are now already or at the very real risk of being fully involved in the sanctioning system of young people, carrying with it all the potential risks in relation to contributing to young people's up-tariffing in the case of re-offending. Thus, it is imaginable that non-attendance or irregular attendance at the project, coupled with re-offending during participation in the project and as a consequence potential appearance before the court, could lead to tougher sanctions being imposed which an offence if committed otherwise would not warrant. The GYDPs would therefore be clearly involved in widening the net of social control and their operation would have to undergo the same level of scrutiny demanded- yet not even fulfilled in the context of the statutory Diversion Programme.

The issue of voluntary participation is one to be closely followed over the next few years. Particularly when looking at the British context, where an increasing number of young people are referred to youth work projects from schools, the police, Connexions and other agencies, which require young people to attend (Davies and Merton, 2009: 10). Youth work organisations and youth workers have found ways how to work around this issue of participation, by 'leaving the referring agency to deal with non-attendance' (Davies and Merton, 2009:10). However, this nevertheless comprises youth work principles and enmeshes youth work organisations in the wider social control agenda of young people.

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Griffin (2007) or Kilkelly (2011) for a detailed discussion. The most significant potential infringement of young people's rights is in relation to the amendments made to the Children Act 2001 by the Criminal Justice Act 2006. This allows evidence as to the involvement in the Programme to be admitted in subsequent proceedings at the sentencing stage. According to Kilkelly (2011:147), this alters 'fundamentally the basis on which the child now enters the Programme which previously offered diversion and a clean slate in return for agreeing to be cautioned and supervised'.

## **Young people's active participation**

Young people's active participation is considered a central element of the youth work process. The claim made is that youth work provides young people with the opportunity to shape and participate in democratic decision making processes both within and outside the concrete project setting, supporting young people in reaching out into their local and wider communities (Batsleer, 2008:142). Although young people's participation has been a core value of youth work in Ireland and long before it became central to current government policy, Kiely suggested in 2009 that 'the adjustments in power relations required in the youth service and in wider society to invest the concept of youth participation with real meaning have not happened' (Kiely, 2009:25). The analysis of interview materials confirms this finding, as in the majority of accounts young people's participatory involvement in the GYDPs was to the largest extent confined to them choosing activities or project workers tailoring programmes in responses to their expressed interests. Project worker Martin for example described the following process when asked how young people's participation was supported in the projects.

Like, I said, the initial visit where myself and Siobhan, go to the house. We try to find what their interests are, and then we try to design a programme around that. They might say, their interested in sport, we'd go ahead and have soccer for them. If they're interested in computers, we'll try organising a computer programme for them. All of the programme is tailor made around them, you know.

More so than this rather limited conception of young people's active participation in the GYDPs, several project workers implied that young people's participation in choosing activities had to happen in the framework of contributing to the reduction of offending behaviour. Project worker Niamh for example, suggested that young people's needs and interests would be met but only if they fit with the broader agenda of preventing crime.

It'd start from the initial engagement of the young person, so to look at their needs, what they actually need... it's not about having fun programmes all the time like, we are here to prevent crime or to even reduce it. So the young people would have a great position in the project to shape what programmes we do ... If it can fit in and if it is appropriate to what goals and targets that the project is trying to meet, we will try our best to accommodate them but obviously not all the time can we do sports or arts

in class like we are here to achieve our own goals, so they would have a great position in shaping the project.

A similar sentiment was put forward by project worker Aaron, who pointed out that what distinguished GYDP provision from other kinds of youth provision - as he perceived it - young people's behaviour would warrant certain types of activities aimed at changing it. In this way, young people's active participation in choosing activities was limited by the fact that they have been referred to as 'offenders', and it is their offending behaviour which ultimately determines what the project offers. Young people are now described as needing to undergo particular 'treatment':

If you ask anyone here, they're referred here by the JLO. I think in any other youth project, they can just turn up. We're very strict on that because we're strict on not being seen as a youth project. Even though some of the things we may do may be youth projecty, there's an underlying thing that the whole time we're not doing something for the sake of doing it because they have been caught ultimately by the guards and the criminal justice system. You can't be rewarding behaviour.

In a few instances, such as for example in project worker Matthew's account, there was an indication of the presence of more egalitarian relationships with young people in terms of their participation.

What we have here is actually I suppose is more than a project. I suppose young people, they love coming here. They drop in during their lunch break, you know. It's theirs. They take ownership over it and they all... these kids might not mix in the community but while they're here, they all work together and they all plan stuff together. So, it's more the project to me personally. It's like their own little community. It's like their own support network. So, I'm not going to say to a young person after 6 months and say, 'Your time is up. Move on. You're fixed now. Go.'

In Matthew's description of young people's participation in the project, it also becomes apparent that the project- in line with the more egalitarian relationship- also takes a significant part of the fabric of young people's lives. It was also notable the project was one of the few working beyond its mandate as a GYDP and was building up additional support structures for

young people, e.g. through including a large network of volunteers to cover those interests and needs that the GYDP could not cover. The project then also shifted from being an intervention in young people's lives to a space which they owned and a community they formed. Matthew also showed as an example, how the level of young people's 'ownership', occasionally challenged project staff:

Yeah, it's theirs and we couldn't get away with doing stuff here sometimes. They pull us up on stuff. We have young people here that if they think I am being unfair, they'll challenge me. If they see me reacting to a certain young person or take the wrong approach with the young person, they'd all ask me why ... and I suppose they have a magazine and it's their stories on the magazine. They're not edited at all.

Across the projects interviewed, young people's participation in project governance was limited to only one project, whereas two others were in the process of setting up more participatory structures. In one project, the regional youth work organisation had set up an organisation-wide youth council. This included membership of GYDP participants and the youth council was significantly involved in deciding on project activities and project budgets across a range of projects (including the GYDP). As a consequence, project worker Nancy highlighted how this fundamentally altered some of the power relations between young people and adults, by putting young people in the driving seat where they had opportunity to develop vital skills.

So, at the moment, we're waiting for them to come back to us to tell us what they're doing for the summer. So, myself, Matthew and the volunteers are actually sitting here waiting, and you know, looking at our money to see about the budget... we have to wait for them to come back and say, 'right this is what we can be doing for the summer.' So it's them... It's their service, it's them that's supposed to be benefiting. So it gives them a lot more empowerment and decision-making skills as well.

Project worker Oliver, who was one of the project workers most critically aware of youth work values and often drew attention to their absence in official GYDP discourse, pointed out the challenges of genuinely involving young people in project governance, given the increasing pressures to limit the duration of young people's participation in the projects to meet new needs.



These young people aren't at the moment and hopefully we would get there, but they're not like on a junior leadership committee or they're not like running programs like, like for younger people because they're only in six or what six, seven, eight months like so I'd like, that's where I'd like us to see us going but then see it would take me like probably four years to get there with them and can I keep them for that long if they're not reoffending and then I've new referrals coming in?

The pressures on youth workers to limit their relationships with young people to defined timeframes, was also one of the concerns emerging in Merton's and Davies' (2009: 11) inquiry into the state of youth work in the UK. Youth workers were expected to build relationships with strongly alienated young people within six months and 'show results'. Also in the Irish context, this is indicative of the priorities in targeted youth work provision, such as the GYDPs, where the focus is not on young people's long term personal development and social education but rather about tackling particular concerns that are considered out of reach of other service providers in a short period of time. This situation however, bears an inherent contradiction. The very success of youth work practice in settings such as the GYDPs lies in developing long-term and trusting relationships with young people, which can also potentially contribute to behavioural change on young people's part (see e.g. Ilan, 2007). The rather narrow conceptualisation of participation emerging in the context of the GYDPs is possibly also reflective of the rather limited conceptualisation of young people's participation in the wider public sphere (Devine, 2012).

### **Working with groups and critical social education**

The associational element of youth work manifested in the shape of 'group work' as opposed to 'one-to-one work' is often described as a central feature of youth work. The claim made is that group work in young people's peer-settings can go beyond affecting individual change and produce collective outcomes, while simultaneously supporting young people in learning about decision-making processes in groups and other important social processes. The increasing move towards work with individual young people, has been critically noted by commentators, who suggest that it both plays to the demands made by the state, but also wider societal interests: '...our most powerful educational and welfare ideologies continue to be overwhelmingly focused on individual potentiality or individual pathology...' (Davies, 2005: 14).

The predominant engagement with young people via 'one-to-one work' in the context of the GYDPs was indeed strongly evidenced in the interview data. Project workers repeatedly highlighted how more 'one-to-one' work marked one of the key differences of working with young people on the GYDPs and more youth work oriented projects. When asked whether she considered the work she was doing on the GDYP different from youth work, project worker Siobhan for example highlighted 'one-to-one' work as the key distinguishing feature in youth work projects.

Oh yeah, absolutely. I wouldn't say more specialised, but like in the past my job in X, I was taking 30 or 40 of the kids on a trip whereas now it could be just one, and maximum I'd have is five. It's more intense. Okay. And it's more one-to-one, I guess.

Several rationales were provided by project workers and JLOs in justifying or explaining the increased use of 'one-to-one' work with young people. First, young people's needs were described as fundamentally different and more intense to those of young people participating in other youth work projects. Hence they would require more 'intensive' and 'tailored' support. This was for example highlighted by project worker Oliver's reflection on the difference between youth work and work with young people on the GYDPs:

Yeah, I know there is definitely a difference like most youth work projects wouldn't work with young people on a one to one basis, I suppose. Whereas I would say that it's vital for youth justice projects because of the nature of the young people again. I think that in youth justice projects... we're working with young people that are hanging on the edge there, there is no, there is no next rung you know they're right there...

Similarly, his colleague Jessica suggested that young people's needs are fundamentally different, compared to those young people participating in youth work projects, and thus demand additional one-to-one work.

Well, with regards to your mainstream, young people wouldn't have as many needs as the needs of a Garda Diversion group. And you come in and you'd probably meet with the mainstream group on a weekly basis, you know, and very rarely, you'd come up

with big issues that wouldn't be the normal kind of way, the transition from primary to secondary school, you know, boyfriend, girlfriend type things. They're coming to puberty, adolescence and stuff. That's our mainstream. Whereas, with your Garda diversion, there's a lot more complex issues to be dealing with like you know, with regards to probably substance use and there could be like the offending, obviously, there would be some sort of offending behaviour and school issues, family issues, you know.

Similarly, JLO Gavin suggested that group work would be more appropriate for young people who committed minor offences (e.g. shoplifting), whereas work with individual young people would be more appropriate for more challenging young people.

I mean I've always believed that you have to keep them [young people] in a group, you know. I know some people would imagine that you'd be better off working one-to-one and being very rigid and putting all your resources into one-to-one. And maybe that's fine if they need counselling and they need, you know, they're particularly struggling... so, they need to be kind of counselled rather than put into groups. Whereas say, kids that are into shoplifting, particularly girls, they just need some kind of support, social support.

A second and related rationale frequently provided for one-to-one work was that young people were not capable of working in groups, as explained by project worker Niamh:

...we do have time to do one to one work with young people, so a lot of people they can't be in a group, it's just their behaviour will be too bad or they just want individual attention that we cannot give in a group, so we do provide time to work with young people on a one to one basis.

Project worker Aaron even went a step further, suggesting that group work might even be harmful to more vulnerable young people or might allow anti-social attitude or behaviours to go unchallenged or to escalate. In his statement, individual work with young people gained the status of containment and control and group work is limited to achieving behavioural change. This position is reflective of Jeff's and Smith's (2002) broader observations on the changing nature of youth work in the context of more prescriptive policy agendas. They suggested that

where group work is practiced in contemporary youth work settings this would be justified by achieving 'ameliorative ends'.

We do a lot of individual sessions here. We don't do very much groups. We try not to do a huge amount of groups because sometimes that's where they plan things and sometimes, you may have a very quiet guy, and he might be involved in things... And the thing is, it's very attractive for the other guys, like sometimes they just think that they're cool and keep on the cool side with the real mean guys, but they will get involved though. The only group things, at the moment, that we do is the behavioural group sessions.

Project workers frequently linked the increased use of one-to-one work to the demands made by the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), particularly with regards to proving the linkage of project activities to dealing with offending behaviour and achieving tangible results. Project worker Ciara for example, highlighted how the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) introduced a shift towards prioritising one-to-one work:

It's predominantly one-to-one or maybe very small groups of maybe two-three. There wouldn't be very large groups because you'd find that the issues aren't being addressed, you know what I mean....Like I definitely have felt because I've been here for only for the last six months, like from when I started in January, it was kind of trying to get as many young people involved as you can. And then, we went to an information day there which was given by the Irish Youth Justice Service in relation to the restructuring of the diversion projects based on the two pilot programs. It appears to me anyway that it's going to be moved towards more individual work.

Interestingly, all those project workers who referenced the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) as the main stimulus for increased one-to-one work commented on this as a positive development, which would bring more 'clarity' to their work and be more 'effective' in achieving behavioural change.

I would definitely see a difference when it comes to 'one to one'. That has been the success I suppose really for us. We started doing that more and that is different from general youth work, because in general youth work we don't do that.

Similarly, Max described an increase in individual work as one of the main outcomes of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). This would in his view amongst other things also contribute to more effective work. He drew on new public management discourse promoted by contemporary youth justice policy discourse, to explain how the work they did was better focused and effective.

We're now doing more individual work and more very focused individual work. We're doing less... not generic pieces, but less bigger pieces and our groups are smaller. The intensity of what we do is greater. And our paperwork is more definitive. And we feel like we're supported and guided in terms of Irish Youth Justice and Garda Community Relations. So we were always happy to a degree with what we are doing, but how could we do it better? How could we maximize what we were doing to get the most out of us? We just got tighter and better in what we were doing.

As a result of this focus on more one-to-one work, project workers often drew upon a 'case-management' discourse which can be typically found in social work and other caring professions, rather than in youth work. Project worker Oliver suggested that 'case mentoring' became the practice in GYDP settings, as a result of the demands put on project workers to fill those gaps left by other agencies:

But I think that Garda Diversion work because you're doing, kind of, a one to one case mentoring, that's not even what it's supposed to be. You end up, like contacting the agencies, or you end up finding out about social workers ... 'cause there's self-harm or drugs issues and stuff.

This was also reflected in project worker Jessica's description of her working day. She was conscious that this case-mentoring type of work resembled social work case management, as she described her attempts to include young people in more informal activities, in her efforts to make the experience different from this.

There's a lot more work with the linking in, making sure that they're doing okay...I do probably stalk them about at this stage ... I've done my initial house calls with my referrals, but that was two weeks ago...so I pencilled in like yesterday morning. My whole morning was ringing around seeing how the young person is doing. Is there any

changes, stuff like that. Is there anything else that you could support them with... and individual follow up... I'm always conscious of not making it real like social work you know, say invite them down to the youth centre, to the drop ins and stuff like that that's informal but also know that we're here for the one-to-ones, for the more intense support if that's what they need.

In conclusion, this strong emphasis on one-to-one work as opposed to group work was also reflected in how project workers and JLOs described their work with young people in terms of changed outcomes they wished to see or wished to achieve with them. As will be further discussed in Chapter 8, the most strongly emerging discursive theme in this context was the focus on achieving individual behavioural change within the young people. Although critical reflection on the failures of other agencies, the stereotyping of young people and other socio-cultural factors in ameliorating young people's offending behaviour where occasionally discursively drawn upon, project workers did not perceive they had any role in addressing these. Partly, this emerged as the expression of conscious pragmatism – the feeling of helplessness and that it was most practical to support young people individually to 'fit' into the system. It seems reasonable to also suggest, particularly in light of the individualising constructions of young people and their offending behaviour discussed in detail in chapter 8 of this thesis, that the emphasis placed on one-to-one work was also related to a lack of expressed awareness of wider socio-cultural impacts on young people's offending behaviour (Broom, 2008).

### **The role of youth work in the GYDPs - a unique way of working with young people**

In the interviews, project workers and JLOs were also asked how they understood the role of youth work in an intervention such as the GYDPs. The answers emerging varied greatly, yet they can be analysed under the following headings.

First, the large majority of project workers and JLOs were keen to point out the advantages that youth work would bring to an intervention such as the GYDPs. The emphasis of statements was placed on highlighting one of the principles or descriptors of youth work. These included amongst others the voluntary aspect of youth work, the provision of informal education without set curricula, the relationship between project workers and young people, and the provision of a safe environment for young people. Amongst these, both project

workers and JLOs most frequently highlighted the 'relationship' established between project workers and JLOs as being the single biggest contribution that youth work would make to the projects. The experience which is also confirmed in the broader literature (Blacker, 2010; Bowden and Higgins 2000; Davies and Merton, 2009; Ilan 2007) was that young people were willing and able to reflect on their behaviour with the project workers, once the trusting relationship was established. Project workers and JLOs frequently compared the relationship between project workers and young people as more egalitarian compared to that achieved by other professions with young people, such as social workers, teachers, JLOs or probation officers. Project worker Matthew for example when asked about the role of youth work in the projects, highlighted how youth work was characterised by a different kind of relationship and how this was fundamental to working with young people, and for young people to 'move forward':

We have I suppose in youth work... and because we're not calling ourselves social workers. I think social workers are seen as somebody who has a lot of power. I think to young people, youth workers don't have power. We are there as sort of mentors, friends, partners. And I suppose that's the part young people actually, you know, move to first and actually appreciate that and move forward with you.

Project worker Oliver also emphasised that youth workers offered an alternative to authority figures, including young people's parents and that their voluntary attendance was also advantageous to the setting.

I think a youth worker would come across as informal and it's voluntary also. Whereas, the young person has to go to school, you know. And they become very defensive towards authorities and their parent is their parent, whereas, as a youth worker again, it's voluntary. They can only tell us what they want to tell us ... it's on a voluntary basis...It works well with young people..that they don't have to come.

Also JLO Laura contrasted the role of the youth worker with that of the social worker or the relationship between young people and their parents, and the construction of the project space as the provision of a safe space.

Yeah the social workers I think well in an area like this, if they hear social work, they get very defensive. They just say they're not taking the kids off me. I don't think that they see the wider picture that they're actually there to try and assist them. I think the youth workers, they wouldn't really, even though they would engage with the parents, it's more about the youth. It's more youth targeted and I think the kids appreciate that it's for me, it's not for my parents. Yeah and like that ... the fact that they can just walk in to the youth centre and they know it's somewhere safe and if they have a concern, they can go there...

JLO Paul emphasised the youth worker's ability to listen to young people and how this would open the way for achieving behavioural change.

Because they're prepared to listen. And that is the one problem young people have with adults. They don't listen. And when they realise that you're listening to them for the reason why they're doing that, then you can concentrate how to get and divert them away from that.

However, what also emerged from the interview findings was that the relationship between young people and project workers was not necessarily unique to youth workers, as it was also accorded central importance by those workers from a social care background who throughout their interviews explicitly positioned themselves as working differently with young people than youth workers. However, a slightly different emphasis could be observed in these statements. For example, project worker Una, when asked what she would describe as the most important principles of her work with young people, highlighted 'respect' and 'relationships'. However, the tone here was slightly different, as she described how young people would lack respect for various institutions and that this perspective could change, once they had established a relationship with the project worker.

I think, for a lot of them, respect. They don't have respect for home. They don't have respect for school. They don't have respect for authority. They don't have good relationships with any of those. When they start to build a relationship with you, their perspective changes. I know that sounds very basic but I think working with most of the males we've had, the minute they build up a relationship with you and I think when they hit 17 or 18, they realize that the relationship that's built up and their form



of thinking or their form of offending and why'd they offend changes drastically and they use it to their advantage. When that happens, they seem to be getting on better at home. They're getting on better either in school or with their peers or a lot of them would change their peer group.

Finally, nearly all JLOs outlined the role of youth work, by describing in very positive terms the individual contribution of project workers. This was based on their personal relationship with and knowledge of personal qualities and skills of those working positively with young people. A thread running through these observations was their perception that youth workers had to have a certain predisposition or talent for the job, as stated for example by JLO Peter:

I have huge admiration for them and they need huge patience, most of them enjoy it, but you'd have to be cut out for it like... you know same as your own role now, you have to be cut out for the job you're in but most of them you see them come in with a smile on their faces and they're happy, and they're happy to meet the kids and very seldom you'll see them frustrated now.

### **Supporting diversion work, social control and policing**

Another aspect which emerged strongly in the course of the interviews was how youth work was seen as a support mechanism to the JLOs and efforts undertaken under the Diversion Programme. This resonates with the strategy in the *Agenda of Change*, (IYJS, 2009b:61) to more directly link the projects to the Diversion Programme. However, the specific ways of understanding how diversion would be supported by project workers within the set up of the GYDPs differed greatly between JLOs. At one end of the spectrum, JLOs such as Rachel placed strong emphasis on the multiple supports that the GYDPs could offer to young people. Her description strongly resembles that provided by any youth work project.

So, the X project can deal with children on different levels. It can give them occupational stuff like activities, that kind of stuff, football, swimming, tour, fishing, all that kind of stuff. So, from that, it gives them an activity-based thing but it also can give them an educational-base in that the coordinators can do one to one work, on computers, doing their CV, stuff like that...so, the projects can influence in different ways at different levels, you know.

On the other hand JLO Laura's description suggests that projects were seen as an extension of police work and hence fulfilled a direct social control function.

Well from my perspective, I would hope ... by referring them to the projects, it would offer a proper diversion, that they would feel maybe they're not getting the support at home and the youth worker would be there, a person looking out for them. Some of them would engage quite well with me but some of them won't, some of them just see the Gardai and that's it, they close down. So it's another avenue and as regards supervision from my formal cautions, if they're not engaged with me and I know they're engaged out there, you know, it's something and I can get the information, I can get the feedback or I can see them down [there] attending at the different groups or whatever. And even if they only go there twice a week for an hour, that's the two hours a week that they're not out in the streets. You know and the temptation isn't there to get into trouble.

Laura indicated in her statement how the projects facilitated her access to information about the whereabouts of young people, which she might otherwise not obtain. Her statement further drew upon language indicating how projects contained young people in those hours they are attending the projects. Her choice of terminology as the projects offering 'proper diversion' is indicative of the increasingly interventionist approach of diversion also in the Irish context (see Goldson, 2000) and of the notion of the GYDP serving a policing agenda and an additional link in the network of social control.

Also some project workers' statements demonstrated how they participated in an overt social control agenda where young people were concerned. This was particularly striking in those cases where project workers described themselves as 'youth workers' as for example in project worker Michael's case. Here Michael followed up his description of how to 'empower' young people by 'giving them a little bit of respect and self-esteem', by narrating a conversation between himself and a young person, but one in which he positioned himself in a policing role, albeit an informal one.

And you can use the word which I think again is, you know, empowering the young people to make decisions. Say, 'Hey Johnny, look for God's sake, what were you doing out last night at two o'clock? Why is the Gardai having to tell me that you're out there

in front of the local fast food outlet?’ ‘What were you doing out there?’ ‘Ah...Michael...sure...look’ ‘Look, do me a favour, if you’re down there tomorrow night, he’s going to pick you up and you’re back with me. Now, do you want me to go up to your parents, have a word with them as to why you were out?’ ‘Oh, they don’t know I was out.’ ‘Okay. Do me a favour. Don’t let me see you off for the next two nights.’ And it works.

In his statement, project worker Michael combined rather unproblematically his discursive positioning as youth worker with the description of a policing function. Similarly, project worker Anna first described how the projects aimed to raise young people’s self-esteem. Yet her choice of language in places reflected a distinct social control ethos in the account she provided of the objectives of their work.

And the main objective is to work with young people to have them in such a way that they’re already on the road to crime. So it’s just to *pull them back from that road* that they don’t continue in that line of behaviour. And then basically to give their confidence and their way of thinking a more positive way to work with because obviously when they are committing these crimes and they are their getting into anti-social behaviour. A lot of it has to do obviously with a lack of self-esteem. So that’s our main objective. *It’s just to put them on the straight and narrow*, really that’s it (Italics: my emphasis).

Even project workers who were throughout their interviews strongly referring to youth work as their point of reference for professional practice, reported positively and uncritically on the practice of exposing young people to the prison visit as part of the *Copping On* Programme<sup>3</sup>.

Being a diversion project, we always fit in a prison visit and they are mind blowing. We visit the X prison. There’s a course called *Copping On*.

How young people were scared and at least impressed by visiting prisons as part of the *Copping On* Programme was also frequently mentioned by both project workers and JLOs. This practice of organising prison visits for young people strongly resonates with Foucault’s

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<sup>3</sup> The *Copping On* Crime Awareness Programme for young people was established in 1996 and provides training to a broad range of professionals (teachers, youth workers, etc.) to provide crime awareness training for young people.

observation in relation to the ambitions of French penal reformers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The punishment while not having the 'physical effect of terror' continued to remain visible and through this fulfils the function of the 'new penal code': '...now it was being suggested that children should come and learn how the benefits of the law are applied to crime- a living lesson in the museum of order' (Foucault, 1977: 112).

Finally and related to the social-control discourse invoked by many project workers and JLOs, interview participants frequently described how projects were fillings gaps which other agencies were unable to address. These observations are reflective of the broader shape of Irish youth work, which has often been described as ameliorative and compensatory (see e.g. Kiely 2009; Treacy 2009). Project worker Ciara's statement for example indicated how the project was expected to fundamentally serve social work and policing. She justified the involvement of youth work in the GYDPs based on the fact that young people's needs would simply not be fulfilled by these other agencies.

I suppose youth work is about meeting the needs of the young person and supporting them in their development. And support them either to continue their education, working with the schools in partnership in doing that, getting them monthly employment and building up their skills level because I don't know, you know, what role probation or social worker would play in that. Because we would be rung [telephoned] by social workers saying can you do this with a young person because we have no ability to do it and if we weren't here, it wouldn't be done. I definitely think there is a role for youth work in the projects.

Also JLO Gavin narrated in his statement how children with problematic behaviours were thrust towards youth workers in lieu of proper services and supports.

And, you know, if we have kids, a kid that has ADHD ... give them to a youth worker, I mean does a youth worker know? I don't even know how I would deal with a hyperactive child. So, traditionally, youth workers have been asked to work with children but there's nothing to say that they're doing the right thing. But to go and replace it [youth work] with therapy ... you're talking about a very expensive model of trying to deal with it.

The strong presence of a 'social control' discourse in both project workers' and JLOs' accounts is indicative as to how normalised youth crime prevention discourse has become in the context of the GYDPs, co-existing comfortably in many cases with youth work discourse.

### **Working with young people on the GYDPs: Youth justice work?**

In the course of the interviews, project workers were also asked how they would characterise the main difference between the GYDPs and other kinds of youth work projects and how this would influence their work with young people. Markedly, project workers most frequently referred to two main differences working on the GYDPs. First, they cited the limited access of young people belonging to either the primary or secondary target group, as differentiating the projects, as explained by project worker Theresa:

Well our work is very targeted, you see. Most other youth work projects would have an open policy where people make self referrals, parents can refer and stuff ... our referral system is very tight. And now, there's a little bit leeway within it, but our referrals would primarily come from Community Gardai and Juvenile Liaison Officers. So a lot of the young people we work with would've already come into contact with the law, so that would be the main difference.

From a youth work perspective, this is not to be underestimated, as it could be argued that this way of recruiting young people into projects stands in contradiction with the youth work principle of universality. A few project workers, such as project worker Nancy highlighted how the increasing demand to focus on primary referrals would be challenging in daily project practice, but would also be in contradiction to youth work principles.

The main difference would be that we are by guidelines supposed to focus mostly on these [primary target group] but as a project... I know that a few of the projects will find that very challenging, and it kind of – it doesn't make a whole pile of sense to work with such a high rate of primary referrals... The dynamics don't really work. It just makes more sense not to focus on where they've come from. Even though that might be what the project is about and why it's set up. You know, it kind of just doesn't make sense to focus purely on their negative thing it goes against our principles really ...

The second main difference highlighted by project workers was that the focus of the work was clearly on challenging offending behaviour, with clear implications for the delivery of programmes. This included an increased focus on families and more individual sessions to address behavioural change than in other youth work. For project worker Max, who participated on one of the pilot projects, this was a positive development which he linked to the changes introduced by the IYJS through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61).

I think for us it is that emphasis on behavioural change. And it's as simple as that...You know ours is youth justice work and it's just specifically around behavioural change and it's young people who are involved in the juvenile justice system. And that clarity has helped to really keep us focused on what our aims and objectives are. And that's evolved over time, and we would have only began using the youth justice terminology in the past couple of years.

Project worker Anna also highlighted how the programmes conducted with young people were more focused on the offending behaviour. Similarly to many other project workers, she also reiterated that the involvement of families in the work would also be a distinguishing feature of GYDP project work. Her statement in which she claimed that offending behaviour would 'stem a lot from the actual family' is reflective of both the popular discourse on families as one of the explanatory factors of young people's offending behaviour, as well as official project discourse (see Appendix 9).

The programmes will be a little bit different, like, you know, general youth work they would look again, maybe they are not getting on it school, or they might be bullied, or maybe they are just not good mixers, so they do programmes around that... with the youth justice, it's more- again why are they behaving antisocially? And then you'd probably look at their families as well, because a lot of that would... They wouldn't generally look at families and their background in youth work and in youth justice it seems to be more prominent and the reason why the young person is behaving in such a way and that seems to stem a lot from the actual family.

Some project workers had no difficulties in representing themselves as 'youth justice workers', a terminology which has been introduced with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). When asked how he would describe his job title, project worker Martin stated:

Youth justice worker. Because at the end for the day, we're different from the main stream youth work because we're dealing with...80% of our work is done with referrals from the JLOs, so, like I said at the start, our main objective is to divert these young people away from anti-social behaviour and a life of crime.

In reference to Butler's work (1993) on the subject, Raby (2006:14) suggested that as 'the subject emerges through submission to categories or names that have been created through power relations, subjects must reiterate that power in order to maintain existence' (Raby, 2006:164). This was very much observable in the case of several other project workers, who stated that officially they would call themselves 'youth justice workers' or 'project coordinators', but would otherwise abandon such titles and simply call themselves youth workers.

The responses of several project workers when considering the difference between GYDP project work and youth work indicated how they had not reflected upon these issues. The view expressed in these cases was that work on the projects resembled youth work, while containing a specialised element related to working directly in relation to offending behaviour. Collette for example who worked as a project worker on an independent project and was trained in youth work was very clear that the work had to be related to youth crime prevention and diversion, but that the particularities would depend on individual project workers.

It's just another element...it's a slant I would call it....like we would still...if they want to learn about drugs and alcohol...we would still bring that in... if they want to learn about careers... we'd still bring that in...which is also part of the European Social Fund purpose ...but you still have to maintain the bottom line...that's why we are here solely: youth crime prevention and diversion ...it always has to be an element of it ...but i don't know would it be too much different from ...it's not completely off the scale of what an ordinary youth worker ...but that could depend on the youth worker as well...and what their leaning is....

Projects workers also talked about what they considered essential to their youth work practice within the framework of the GYDPs. Several project workers were adamant that they were doing 'youth work' regardless of the context of the agenda being pursued within the GYDPs.

Notably, these were the project workers who were also most critical the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). This is exemplified in project worker Nancy's statement.

I think youth work is youth work, and it goes across the board. We would treat all of the young people the same as somebody who is a secondary referral or a self-referral or whatever. They would be treated the same way and they might have needs the same as the primary referral that just haven't been taken into account. They haven't been brought to the attention of the guards, in fact they might even have more needs and need more attention and need more work, and that's what happens, we work with them, not just because they are a referral.

At the same time she was reflective as to where the introduction of new guidelines etc. was leading projects in relation to the youth work ethos she held central to her practice. Similarly to some other project workers, she suggested that the role and contribution of youth work was valuable and unique in the context of the projects, but that the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was mutating youth work into practice closer to probation or social work, without the negative reputation sometimes associated with these professions.

With the guidelines at the moment - it's almost like they are creating... It is going down to punitive. It's going towards probationary kind of work and I just think that for a young person who is receiving cautions, it's too soon, and it's going to just have a negative effect. So I wouldn't necessarily, you know, personally I wouldn't necessarily agree with the new guidelines and I would see them as quite blind-sided coming from a level that doesn't actually understand the young person's needs as opposed to from the youth worker's perspective. These new guidelines were -they are not coming from the youth work experience. They are coming from funds... they come from funders.

Her colleague, project worker Matthew, re-asserted that he would be doing youth work despite the project context and expressed how he felt straitjacketed in his role as a youth worker on a diversion project, pointing to the tension between his youth work organisation as the implementing organisation and the funding body.

For me, I have worked in drugs projects and had a different title but I think a young person is a young person is a young person and they are going through a crisis in their life and we are there to support them and encourage them to come through the other side.... The frustrating thing for me I suppose is that, there are other aspects of youth



work that I enjoy doing, but I had to give them up since I began working in the diversion project because the organisation and myself would have to justify it to people that don't really understand youth work.

Similarly to his colleague Nancy, Matthew was adamant that youth work in the context of the GYDPs was 'very much underrated and that we are seen as the end of the food chain'. He also provided interesting insights into the premise under which youth workers were drawn into the projects: 'because I think youth workers bought into these projects and came of it on the back of it with their qualifications of their management company and when they got in there, none of their skills and none of that experience is actually what they want.'

These perceived tensions between the requirements put on projects and project workers by the IYJS on the one hand and the parent organisation on the other hand, was also expressed by several other project workers. Sophie for example, pointed to the tension between the organisational ethos of the youth work organisation and the ethos of the diversion.

I suppose I had to grasp the understanding of the organisation first and foremost because before I tended to know that diverting the people from crime was Irish Youth Justice. But I really had to kind of ... to let the organisation's philosophy grow on me and really understand it before I could encapsulate what Irish youth justice were doing. It took me a couple of months because I always had this division in mind- youth work organisation versus Irish Youth Justice. There was always the organisation versus the funder, you know what I mean. And it still is.

Finally, it is also important to note that there were a few project workers who did not come from a youth work background, who were very critical of the contribution which youth work could make in the context of the projects. Project worker Aaron, who came from a social care background perceived his own professional practice as similar to youth work in terms of building relationships with young people and providing activities, but was adamant that some youth workers he had encountered were not sufficiently outcome orientated.

So, I'm quite focused on delving into certain areas... they [youth workers] would see that as a kind of too intrusive. And they get very defensive. I find them quite...very defensive. I suppose the thing is that I'm client...I call myself client-centred, not just

youth work-centred but client-centred. So, the thing is that it's just working from where the young person's at but working on the issues of why they're here. But they're here for a reason and it's a serious matter. And if they don't understand the seriousness of it, they just see it as a, like they see the Garda Diversion Project as a youth club. I just think that's horrendous. I think it's a complete waste of money. I think it's a joke. And I think that if they see it like that, they obviously don't see their behaviour as a problem.

Project worker Aaron's statement was strongly worded and reflective of official youth crime prevention discourse and practice in relation to the GYDPs: projects are financed with a clear objective of reducing offending behaviour and should not be confused with more general youth work. The underlying assumption between this duality of youth work on the one hand and diversion work on the other hand, is possibly also based on a misunderstanding of youth work, namely that it is only 'fun' and does not seek to challenge young people's behaviour. However, challenging young people's behaviour is also a central tenet of youth work, yet possibly it is the issue of *how* to best do this, that divides those doing youth work in a justice project and those doing youth justice work.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored how GYDP workers and JLOs discursively constructed their practice with young people and the ways in which official project discourse was drawn upon by interview participants. This analysis has put into relief the unresolved and in the context of the GYDPs, hidden debate with regards to the involvement of the youth work sector. On some issues, there was evidently a clear distinction between those project workers drawing more strongly on their youth work identities and those which were more amenable to the discourse of youth crime prevention on the other. For example, in the definition of project objectives, 'aligned' project workers more or less repeated the official project definition, whereas others highlighted how other priorities, such as progressing aspects of personal development, would for them define the objectives of the GYDPs. The distinction between responses of those who were more strongly anchored in youth work discourse and those more aligned with official project discourse became increasingly blurred when looking at how project workers and JLOs described successful project outcomes. Across the board, these referred to incremental and small measures of success and the individual nature of success. Despite the variety of accounts

in terms of defining official project objectives and successes, the common emphasis on 'personal development' across all statements defining 'success' was notable. This can be seen as a reflection of broader official youth work discourse in the Irish context, where perspectives focusing on social education have appeared only shortly in official policy discourse (see Costello 1985 report) and in practice always played a minor role (see Devlin 1989; Kiely 2009). But it was also indicative of the wider construction of young people as individuals responsible for developing their personalities and skills, so that they can negotiate their lives (Kelly, 2006) and the narrow conceptualisation of young people's citizenship more generally (see chapter 8). The strong focus put on individual work with young people- as opposed to group work- in the context of the GYDPs further complemented this individualising conceptualisation of young people.

The interview data also showed how young people's active participation in projects was with rare exceptions defined in rather narrow terms, limiting young people's participation in projects to choosing activities. More significantly, the principle of voluntary participation- not only upheld as a core principle of youth work, but also repeatedly highlighted as one of the core principles of GYDPs- was found to be compromised at times. In several instances, project workers confirmed their belief in the voluntary participation of young people and yet didn't find it unproblematic that their participation in the projects was an element of their supervision agreement made under the Diversion Programme. This has significant implications for young people's rights, which are increasingly vocalised in relation to the Diversion Programme, but have so far entirely escaped any critique in the context of the GYDPs. While the contribution of youth work in the context of the GYDPs was largely highlighted as positive by project workers and JLOs a closer analysis revealed certain contradictions. Thus, while certain practices were for example described as youth work, they were strongly reminiscent of policing roles and often contained language which described the GYDPs as locations of containment of young people. There was agreement across the board that the GYDPs were different from other youth work interventions in so far as they increasingly limited work to those young people already in contact with the law, focused more on challenging behaviour through individual work and involved families more than in more generic youth work type of interventions. Nevertheless, those project workers who repeatedly drew upon a relatively strong youth work identity, reflected upon the tensions thrown up by the meeting of youth work and youth crime prevention. Finally, this chapter traced the contours of what could be described as 'youth justice work' emerging in the context of the GYDPs, including a focus on

young people's families as a site of intervention and a strong emphasis on individual work with young people. However, it also emerged that in many instances the boundaries between 'youth justice work' and more progressive ways of working with young people were not clear cut and combined –despite contradictions- in daily project practice.

## Chapter 7

### Creating and regulating 'youth justice work': the effects of the *Agenda of Change*

#### Introduction

This chapter will analyse how project workers and JLOs engage with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). More specifically, this chapter seeks to identify the extent and ways in which dominant policy discourses identified in chapter 5, including the centralisation of leadership, the responsabilisation of partners, and different elements of new public management discourse are drawn upon by project workers and JLOs. As was already outlined in detail in chapter 5 of this thesis, the *Agenda of Change* was introduced by the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2009 with the aim to 'create more reflective projects', capable of demonstrating 'what difference the project makes to crime prevention'.<sup>1</sup> The *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) also combined a number of dominant policy discourses such as the centralisation of leadership and concurrent responsabilisation of partners and different principles related to an actuarialist logic, such as the focus placed on the achievement of effectiveness at all levels, 'value for money', and evidence-based interventions. In analysing how project workers and JLOs engage with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) and these dominant discourses contained therein, this chapter clarifies how contemporary official policy discourses, particularly around principles of 'New Public Management', are translated into daily project practice. Here, the governmentality approach to social policy analysis was particularly helpful in identifying how rationalities of government (Miller and Rose, 2008), such as different corporatist principles of youth justice, were translated and put into effect through particular technologies (Miller and Rose, 2008), such as reporting and assessment tools. This chapter argues, that the range of changes introduced in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) – whose object is to regulate project workers and JLOs through 'governing at a distance' (Miller and Rose, 2008:16) and to create a new corporate 'identity' for the GYDPs - have particular regulatory effects, which work at different levels and with different degrees of impact. In order to trace and identify these differential impacts, this chapter analyses how project workers and JLOs engage with the different tools and discourses deployed as part of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). This analysis resonates with existing research in this area. In the English context, several commentators have examined how the process of 'governing at a distance', facilitated by the setting up of the Youth Justice Board impacted on local Youth

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<sup>1</sup> Interview conducted by the researcher with Irish Youth Justice Service Official, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2009.

Offending Teams (YOTs) (Crawford, 2001; Pitts, 2001; Souhami, 2007). Souhami (2007) for example showed how the English Youth Justice Board set the agenda and ensured its delivery through a range of governance tools, such as the submission of annual plans by the YOTs for approval, and demands for performance data and self assessment frameworks to measure 'effective practice' (Souhami, 2007:21). The paradoxical outcome – at least as it is posited in the literature is that local YOTs maintain autonomy in their daily work with young people, while the system is more stringently controlled from the centre (Crawford, 2001). However, in this study, the use of discourse analysis of the interview data demonstrated that in the case of the GYDPs this 'centring-re-centring' (Crawford, 2001) dialectic works at different levels and with different degrees of impact. Ultimately I suggest that while the changes introduced by the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) leave 'formal autonomy' with local projects, the degree to which this is the case depends very much on the individual project workers and their level of critical engagement with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). In this chapter a body of literature which conceptualises identity regulation as a form of organisational control (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and which enables the identification and analysis of different discursive strategies of resistance (Ashcraft, 2005; Collinson, 2000; Mumby, 2005; Prasad and Prasad, 2000; Thomas and Davies, 2005), is drawn upon to analyse the diverse ways in which project workers and JLOs respond to the tools deployed by the IYJS in implementing the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The post-structuralist emphasis on conceptualising resistance through discourse, allows for a more nuanced analysis than a more traditional approach with its emphasis on 'material' resistance would allow (see chapter 1). The structure of this chapter focuses on what have been identified as the main strategies deployed by the IYJS to implement the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Thus, the analysis of project workers' and JLOs' engagement with these strategies is discussed around five particular themes: the introduction of new reporting mechanisms, the deployment of discourses of 'partnership' to gain the support of projects in implementing the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), the monitoring of project workers particularly in reference to the inclusion of project participants, the emphasis on economic rationality and evidence-based discourses and finally the impacts on concrete ways of working with young people.

### **The core element of the *Agenda of Change*: new reporting mechanisms**

When asked what they considered to be the biggest impact on their daily work resulting from the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), nearly all interview participants primarily referred to increased and changed reporting procedures. Above all, these changed reporting requirements, include the inclusion of local crime statistics in annual plans; the linking of project activities to local crime statistics and the requirement to demonstrate how activities undertaken with young people are expected to contribute to reduced offending behaviour. From a governmentality perspective, this increased emphasis on reporting according to more tightly defined criteria constitutes one of the core elements of 'governing at a distance'. This strategy is also very much in keeping with the corporatist agenda of youth justice more generally. Increased information flows from decentralised sites of governance, i.e. the GYDPs to the newly established centre of youth crime governance, i.e. the IYJS, are necessities for making these new administrative arrangements workable.

However, the establishment of new rules and regulations can be interpreted as an attempt to regulate the identity of those supposed to follow the new 'rules' (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Indeed, project workers who participated in this research, often reported that the more frequent and more tightly defined reporting criteria were supportive to their daily practice and made them feel supported in their roles as project workers. This finding can also be explained in a context, where prior to the establishment of the IYJS and the introduction of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), project workers reported that they felt they were 'falling between the cracks' of their respective agencies and the funding body. Several project workers recollected how they were expected to set-up diversion projects from scratch without any particular training, support or networking structures. They noted how they did not have the requisite information regarding budgets or previous project participants and activities, leaving them in challenging positions in their day to day work. Against this background, the introduction of more prescriptive reporting and recording criteria, but also the increase in training and networking opportunities were perceived as a welcome support to their work and also as an acknowledgement of the project workers' efforts.

These sentiments were for example demonstrated in project worker Patrick's positive appraisal of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), which he claimed provided him with much more direction and clarity in his work.

I guess, you know, even in '07 there was no direction or ideas from the Irish Youth Justice Service, we didn't even know what budgets we had ... so has that changed, yeah? Dramatically. Now we know what budgets we have. We have more support, definitely coming down from Irish Youth Justice Service, meetings with them you know which is unheard of before. There's more reassurance, you know.... Definitely, big changes and am I happy? Yeah, it gives me more of a, what do you call it, more of ease I think at times, you know, because you have certain targets you have to do, certain reporting which there's templates you know, for reporting, like, and then your report before was a couple of headings, and off you go and that was it.

Similarly, in her recollection of how the project has evolved, project worker Anna attributed positive changes in the project's work to more structured organisation since the introduction of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Her comparison between the increased administrative requirements put on the project to the need for more structure in project participants' lives (which is also one of the main deficit discourses deployed by project workers and JLOs) demonstrates how she perceives the *Agenda of Change* as having positive impact on her direct work and ultimately on young people.

Yes, yes. It has changed dramatically. Like I look at this project.... and I think it's [going from strength to strength] is also down to how its managed as well like you know...yes, actually you need structure. Especially with something like this you need a structure. And you need it around, especially as again, these kids are commonly with no structure in their life. So, the way I look at this, the structure from the top and that means paperwork, there is structure all the way down to the bottom of the tray.

Project worker Marian's account also showed how increased and changed reporting contributed to the work of the projects gaining visibility and being validated by the funding body:

I think it will definitely be helpful. And sometimes, a lot of the work we do here isn't validated and we only do report really to, you know, the next person in command, either supervisor or referrals committee and it goes no further and a lot of the work could be lost. At least now, regularly, we will be, even if it's only statistics, typing it in,



that is going straight on to the Irish Youth Justice Service and they know exactly what it is we're doing.

At one level, the support offered by the increase in structures and reporting requirements demanded by the IYJS, was indicative of the insecurity previously experienced by project workers and which is arguably also indicative of broader societal conditions. As Alvesson and Willmott argue, '...in a postmodern era, feelings of vulnerability and insecurity are heightened, stimulating greater identity work and therefore increased hunger for securing a sense of self which a new wave of management practices satisfy' (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:686). More importantly however, this interview data suggested, that the introduction of new reporting procedures sought to influence the core of project workers' identity, as for the majority of project workers, the introduction of changed reporting procedures, resulted in little discursive space for reflection on the possible impacts of these changes on their identities as project workers, and hence on their interactions with young people.

### **Resisting new reporting mechanisms**

Nevertheless, several project workers contested the introduction of changed reporting requirements. Notably, these were all project workers who throughout their interviews exerted more autonomous worker identities. Project worker Matthew reflected on how the increasingly narrow reporting criteria affected the core of the work, rendering some youth work activities inappropriate in the GYDP settings.

I suppose the only tension and the pressure it puts on me is when the reporting writing has to go back because some of our most positive work won't fit into that...[it does not fit in] because they want us to fix the youth crime in X [location]. Now, we might have a young person who might have committed, say, 20 offences last year. But has now only committed two or three. So, actually it's a fantastic improvement but it's not gonna be heard. I'm not going to be sitting here and being arrogant and say that he stopped committing offences...but the Irish Youth Service and what they expect from a project is actually very much unrealistic.... Like I've had reports sent back because we're doing some piece of work and it's well, yeah, it's youth work. It's good work. But it doesn't fit.

While he suggested that this was only a challenge for him while reporting- and not affecting the core of his work- he clearly perceived this as an expectation for project workers to participate as partners in youth crime prevention. Matthew gave an example how he resisted the exclusion of certain pieces of work being counted as 'youth justice work', by including these in the reports anyhow. This could be described as an attempt to 'de-authorise' (Holt, 2009) the position of the IYJS to define what type of activities are suitable in specific local circumstances with young people. Together with some other project workers, another pragmatic response he chose was to downplay the importance of the introduced changes as a 'paper exercise', provide the information as requested, but not letting it get in the way of his usual work practice.

I see it as another just a sort of a paper exercise ... It's not going to affect the way I work personally and yeah, there's a couple of things I'm going to change because I'm going to move young people on and set up other initiatives outside of the project and I am going to have a support to the project and that's a good thing. But I did that out of my own initiative. Because otherwise I'd have to move them on and there is nowhere for them to go. So it's a stepping outside the box and keeping young people attached here, but on the Garda stats they're not attached. That's like hiding. It's hiding, moving groups.

Matthew's account was also evidence of how the exertion of power is productive, rather than repressive. Together with his colleague, he set up a network of projects supported by volunteers, which could provide young people with support, which the GYDP could not offer anymore, after the introduction of more stringent criteria. In this way he refused to let the IYJS dictate when his project should terminate its connections to young people.

Another example of a differentiated approach to deal with the introduced reporting changes can be seen from project worker Oliver's account. Oliver, who was throughout his interview very critical as well as reflective on how the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), impacted on his autonomous 'youth worker identity', acceded that the detailed referral forms supported him in his practice with young people. But he was also conscious of how it possibly led him to pre-judge young people, rather than accept them without prejudice.

That [the referral form] helps me. That does help me. Yeah. I wish I was less influenced by it [knowing the details of the offence committed by the young person, indicated on the referral form] but like, yeah. It does help me 'cause it can sometimes allow me to say, could you tell me a little bit about that or are you worried about that, you know what I mean.

At another point in the interview, Oliver was adamant that he would not let reporting requirements get in the way of how he liked to engage young people on the projects. His statement is an example of resistance through overt accommodation of demands made on him by 'targeting' particular young people, yet not allowing it to colonise everything she was doing.

And when I'm in my groups it doesn't enter into my head...you know in a way its good, I'm happy to target- and I even hate that word- to target those young people who are at the last rung...but you know once the young people are in, they're in and I work with them based on their needs and I give them whatever paperwork they need.

A small number of project workers expressed concern about how the new reporting procedures signified official distrust in them. Davina, commented that diversion work was going on before the requirement to record everything. Drawing on a youth work discourse, which emphasised the building of relationships, she perceived the necessity to formally assess and report on young people's risky behaviours as an unnecessary 'technicalisation' of her interaction with young people. In a way, she also juxtaposed what she constructed as 'technical labels' with more intuitive – and not often invoked – constructions of young people, who have 'needs and wants and dreams and desires'. Kelly (2011) has suggested that such descriptions of young people are often sidelined in the contemporary social scientific imagination.

When I first started in youth work doing this line of work... nothing was recorded but a lot of work was being done. And now we have to justify what we're doing, but to do it all statistically I think its wrong... but now, we have to code them and tick all of the boxes 'are they from a broken home. They'll say, are they involved in that. Do you do this? Can you provide evidence that you worked with them?' And it dehumanizes the whole process and I find that really, really frustrating because as I said the way how I

work, I mean everyone's their own way of working with young people. But the way I'm working with young people. I am building relationships with young people. I don't wanna come in and say, 'Oh, we tick that box, that box, and that box,' and, 'Oh, I'll have to do A, B, C, and D.' I'd rather work with an individual with individual needs and wants and dreams and desires and try and work with them rather than trying to work with all of these labels that we've got put on the young people...

In this way, Davina refused to let the tick box exercise significantly influence the way she worked. Similarly, project manager Ger, indicated that by providing the requested reporting details, he carved out a resistant space (Gabriel, 1999) to work with young people in an unchanged way. Ger put this dynamic more pragmatically, observing 'Like realistically at a very, very basic level it is the Department of Justice that gives us money to work with young people and we give them whatever paperwork they want.'

In summary, the widespread acceptance of more stringent reporting and recording criteria emerged against the background of a 'leadership vacuum' which facilitated the rather uncritical acceptance of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). What became apparent in these and in many similar accounts was that the Irish Youth Justice Service was conceptualised as trying to better understanding project workers' roles and challenges and actively responding to them through increased support. Yet, a smaller number of project workers viewed the Agenda as part of a broader trend towards deprofessionalisation and official distrust in what they were doing. In these cases however, project workers devised a number of strategies to resist the impact of these changes, such as for example by accommodating themselves to do whatever was required of them on paper.

### **GDYPs as partners in the *Agenda of Change*?**

The emphasis placed on 'partnership' is generally accepted as one of the core features of late modern criminal justice systems (Burnett and Appleton, 2004; Garland, 2001; Smith, 2000; Souhami, 2007). In Chapter 5 I outlined how 'partnership' between the IYJS and the GDYPs also constituted a key discursive strand of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy. Chapter 5 also showed how the IYJS sought to operationalise the concept of 'partnership' through the careful steering of a piloting process, with the aim to enjoin agreement of GDYPs and project workers for the changes entailed in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The

interview data explored in detail for this chapter, show that the deployment of this pilot exercise was effective in different ways. First, the pilot exercise was successful in acknowledging the voice and input of those project workers who were involved in the first phase of the pilot process. Max for example, a project worker on one of the first trial sites, expressed how involved and respected he felt throughout the trial site process and how the relationship between him and the IYJS gradually evolved into a very egalitarian one.

It has been the best piece of work that we've been involved in... I think we have felt respected, we have felt heard... and I think that the value that the practitioners have placed on that is invaluable in terms of our growth. Because so often it's the top down, but it was very much about hearing the experience... What have you to bring to us? What have you and Irish Youth Justice Service, you know, having their pieces to slot in and very much being open to the feedback – constructive and otherwise and from those working in the projects. And it developed over time ... as that mutual respect and the fear level disappeared 'if I say the wrong thing'. 'What if I say the wrong thing. What will happen? I don't want to look like a plonker.' But it's not about that... we are all on equal territory.

Max's account was indicative how the IYJS was successful in instigating change, by exercising power productively. As a consequence, it seemed that project workers such as Max felt they were respected and listened to and had a stake in the process. As a consequence, he became amenable to being 'membershopped' (O'Sullivan, 2005:38) and to being governed by the new set of rules.

The statement of another project worker, Patrick, and his description of his engagement with the IYJS, indicated that he saw it as a very positive process where he felt that his views were appreciated. This belief was indicative of how the productive exercise of power resulted in enjoining agreement amongst project workers. Patrick was not even engaged yet in the first pilot process, but described his engagement with the IYJS through the collection of information during the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b).

We discussed on the overall project, you know, and what way they want to go, you know, and I think they have to take my views on board, which I think we have been involved from day one which is great, you know. It's not coming down with the iron

fist and saying, 'this is the way, and that's it', you know, they will listen to you. They will take your views on board and then go from there, you know.

Similarly, Claire, another project worker involved in the first phase of the pilot process, was unequivocal that the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), was positive for raising standards across projects and that those selected for pilot were better prepared for the change process as it was rolled out.

Yeah, I suppose being part of the pilot has been nothing but positive really for us ...there was a baseline that has been done in 2008 and the baseline analysis showed that there was a huge variance across the country of what was happening in projects. And I think following on from that it was a case of sort of raising all boats basically and I mean I think that was a good thing... So yeah, I think being part of the pilot you know, I mean was fantastic because it kind of put us at the fore front of a lot the stuff that was changing and we kind of got to experience some of the stuff that was brought in and we got to kind of say yeah, that's good, that really works that, so I mean that was very beneficial.

Claire's statement was again evidence of the productive use of power deployed through the piloting project, as she revealed how she felt that it was a privilege for her project to be selected.

In addition to gaining supportive project workers through the use of a 'partnership process', the interviews suggested that this partnership process created a particular identity of project workers and JLOs, which could be described as 'champions'. Project workers and JLOs sought to explain the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), as if speaking on behalf the IYJS, by explaining, elaborating and appropriating official discourse. This became visible for example in JLO Gavin's account, which showed how the piloting project has been successful in repositioning the projects as explicit youth crime prevention projects and the personnel with the requirements of doing youth 'justice' work.

Well again, it's weird and a bit unusual as we are one of the pilot projects so we've been doing a lot of extracurricular stuff like courses and stuff like that and seminars and meetings in relation to it. So, yeah obviously mine has improved a lot, the level of dealing I've had with the project...Well, basically what it's [the change process] doing is

you see as I said that the whole way of viewing the projects at work has changed. Again, accountability is very much the key and what we've done is because we're the pioneers were doing it at an earlier stage than everybody else, so we're literally slightly ahead.... And so, from that point of view, I think that's what we have sort of started to tailor what we do more to the crime or to see if we can have impact on the crime as well as having an impact on the individuals.

### **The limitations of partnership**

However, another perspective that emerged on the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) throughout the interviews reflected how a 'partnership' process can only ever be genuine to a limited extent in a situation where local partners are dependent on the funding from the central agency implementing the change process. Project workers Fiona's and Mary's comments presented below each reveal the inevitability of the change process as something they thought they had no choice but to accommodate.

Mary: ... It's just a new way of doing things, you know. It's just, we better get used to it. I have to be like [alright with this]... doing this. It's just the way it is, we have to do whatever they want you know.

Fiona: ..., you know the way reporting has changed a lot and that can be quite difficult because I suppose we were never necessarily trained, you know in form filling, and then, like although Youth Justice has given different trainings but you know it's like it's still, it's not necessarily all youth workers' natural environment... the strength is maybe working with the young people but I suppose we'll have to... if the funding is supposed to continue like we'll have to get better with quantifying our work and describing it.

Fiona's statement also showed how the discourse of accountability has become so pervasive in official youth crime prevention and GYDP discourse, that alternative possibilities are not considered anymore. Thus, she considered it within the projects' remit to better 'quantify and describe our work', rather than to expect the IYJS to try to understand the work happening with young people and provide appropriate ways for it to be represented.

In contrast, project worker Theresa, who was very critical of some of the changes introduced through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) and considered herself a 'youth worker' finally acceded that cooperating with requirements introduced through the *Agenda of Change*, was inevitable. Nevertheless, while acknowledging implicitly that the *Agenda of Change* was also an identity project, she indicated how she would minimise its impacts by maintaining her particular ways of working with young people. In doing so, project worker Theresa demonstrated how she productively negotiated her role as a worker on the project, complying with official requirements while also resisting a fully fledged change to her role by 'putting her stamp on it':

I suppose the one thing the Irish Youth Justice do is contradict all of that [reflective practice] because it's, you know, even their assessment, tools and stuff are negative, they're all negative based and even ... yeah and everything that's happening with youth work at the present, but then Irish Youth Justice would probably say that we're not youth workers...Now we have to, we have to get involved in the work and that is a challenge as well. I think at the end of the day Irish Youth Justice fund us, we're grateful to have the project here and stuff, and it is doing good work. So, we'll have to just come in line with Irish Youth Justice requirements while still trying to put our stamp on it.

An entirely different experience in relation to engaging as partners with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was voiced by project workers, who throughout their interviews repeatedly positioned themselves as having a strong youth work identity. In these cases, project workers, such as Davina, thought that their voices were not heard throughout the process of change.

Well I know this is anonymous so I'm gonna speak my mind, I think it's ridiculous-- that there's someone coming along and going, 'Right this is how you're gonna work now.' And he came along and he spoke to all of the projects and he took everything in and he wrote a great report. And now he's going, 'This is how you gonna be working.' And I was thinking, did you take anything in? You spoke to youth workers, you didn't work with the kids. Well, it's youth diversion, it's our job to divert young people away from those statistics.



The interview situation provided Davina with an opportunity to use the interview setting as a 'social site of the hidden transcript' (Scott, 1990:120), where she felt that he could express sentiments which he otherwise could not. Similarly, project worker Oliver viewed the change process as something pre-planned and imposed from the top rather than an organic process starting from below

So I suppose increased amount of training that is very molding kind of training, you know, that they're I suppose trying to bring us to their agenda rather than having it as a consultative piece like ... what is your objectives this is what we'd like to achieve and how can we come together whereas, it's just there's no consultations it's just bringing their training and objectives through... any changes that are coming down the line, like I feel that it's like they're putting changes on us when they feel that they're not asking us how can we help you or how can we make the practice better and, you know...

In conclusion, the interview findings suggested that the piloting strategy played an important part in positively introducing the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) to the projects which participated in the exercise. The piloting exercise was carefully steered to ensure that it was positively experienced by projects which participated. The discursive strategies deployed by the Irish Youth Justice Service in highlighting the urgency and the direction of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61, see chapter 5) and the differential reception of these by project workers and JLOs are a prime example of the discourse-knowledge-power triangle. The discursive rationales presented to justify the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) - based on the assertion and repetition of very specific rationales strongly associated with actuarialism and economic rationality more generally - produce an engagement by project workers and JLOs, if also in different ways. Visible effects of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) were that most project workers and JLOs involved in the process felt that their input was valued by the IYJS, that the refocusing of the projects towards quite targeted youth crime prevention projects linked to specific outcomes was taken on by those involved as part of their 'own' agendas, and moreover in a few cases even as champions of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Overall, only a few detractors from this positive exercise of power could be observed: those who expressed discordant views and felt they were not listened to; those who felt that it was a top down exercise with the veneer of meaningful consultation and the project workers who raised concerns for how it would impact on the work or felt that it is something that has to be accommodated and negotiated on the ground rather than actively embraced. In these

accounts, different strategies of resistance could be observed, such as the carving out of space for working with young people, while fulfilling reporting requirements.

### **Governing those who govern: the Agenda of Change and the monitoring of project workers**

Project workers are central to delivering the defined outcomes of the GYDPs, as has been reiterated in official project discourse. Given the diversity of their professional and organisational backgrounds, their regulation is of central importance in the delivery of the re-designed GYDPs. Two instruments where the effects of these efforts became most visible in project workers' accounts were the YLS risk/needs assessment tool as well as the circulated alcohol and crime offending profiles. These generate constructions of young people and their offending behaviour, with direct implications for project practice. Earlier in this thesis, it was shown how these tools discursively construct a certain type of young person 'on paper'. Ultimately the targets for intervention to address offending are the individual young persons and their families, particularly parents. Furthermore the tools also rely predominantly on gathering information on young people, to make known their deficiencies.

The emphasis placed throughout the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) on recording more uniformly and with greater detail young people's information, particularly with regards to their offending behaviour and involvement in the project, is not unique to the GYDPs. In fact, the lack of information on young people who offend has repeatedly been outlined as one of the main shortcomings of the Irish youth justice system as well as the broader children's services area (Kilkelly, 2007:155). From a governmentality perspective, this ever increasing interest in gathering more and more detailed information about children across different areas of their lives can be understood as the attempt to make children and young people into objects which are 'knowable, calculable and administrable' (Miller and Rose, 2009:30). This strategy is closely intertwined with the hope that this 'knowing' of the youthful subject will lead to the design of interventions which are ever more 'successful' in terms of achieving what they set out to achieve. Both the possibility and desirability of this has been critiqued by numerous commentators, who suggest that it is merely a further attempt to colonise children and young people's lives and futile to ever achieve satisfactorily (Kelly, 2007; O'Mahony, 2009; Biesta 2010). In addition, the analysis suggests that these tools are also deployed to monitor professionals' activities or in Ballucci's (2009) words: to govern those who govern

## Directing the gaze of those who govern: assessments and profiles

Table 7.1 and Appendix 8 depict the YLS risk/needs assessment checklist to be eventually used by all GYDPs in selecting and monitoring project participants, as well as the three alcohol and crime offending profiles, compiled and disseminated through the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b). Tracing the early developments of child psychology and drawing on Foucault's analysis of the disciplinary methods' and their objectifying and subjectifying functions (Foucault, 1977), Rose (1990:147) suggested that the deployment of visual images of infants and the tabular outline of children's developmental milestones provides 'simultaneously a means of perceiving, recording, and evaluations' through which 'the unorthodox could be identified'. The interview data suggest that Rose's observations usefully highlight the effects of the systems of classification - such as the YLS or the alcohol and crime and order public order profile - promoted and developed by the IYJS. For Rose (1990:147) 'these images are far more concrete, far more real than the child itself. Children are ephemeral, shifting, elusive, changing before one's eyes, hard to perceive in any stable fashion. These images make the child stable by constructing a perceptual system, a way of rendering the mobile and confusing manifold of the sensible into a legible, visual field'. In this way, both the YLS risk/needs assessment and the alcohol and public order and crime profile should be interpreted as tools which have the effect of fixing the project worker's gaze on particular ways of thinking about young people.

In addition, the requirement to for example report aggregate YLS data in the Annual report as illustrated in Table 7.1 is strongly indicative how reporting procedures are put in place to monitor whether project workers include the 'right' type of young people in the projects. The information to be provided in the aggregate YLS table clearly does not divulge any information about the individual young person, but enables the IYJS to clearly monitor and compare projects. This is an important step towards reaching the goal of transforming projects according to pre-defined 'national comparators/prototypes'<sup>2</sup> of projects and to monitor project workers' going along with this.

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<sup>2</sup> Interview conducted by the researcher with an Irish Youth Justice Service Official on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2009.

**Table 7.1 YLS Aggregate Data to be provided by GYDPs in their Annual Plans**

YLS/CMI-SV		Overall Participants Score
1	History of conduct disorder	0
2	Current school or employment problems	0
3	Some antisocial friends	0
4	Alcohol/drug problems	0
5	Leisure/recreation issues	0
6	Personality/behaviour problems	0
7	Family circumstances/parenting issues	0
8	Attitudes/orientation problems	0
<b>Total Score</b>		0
<b>Number of Participants</b>		0
<b>Total Mean Score</b>		#DIV/0!

It is important to point out that these tools did not introduce entirely novel ways in terms of thinking about young people in the context of the GYDPs. The interview findings indeed confirmed that the majority of project workers were either already using other formal assessment tools such as ASSET<sup>3</sup> or they perceived that the YLS only formalised a process that they already conducted informally, confirming what they already knew. However, the interview findings clearly showed how the official adoption of the YLS at several stages of project practice ensured that project workers were encouraged to report and as an extension, to also think about young people and their offending behaviour as the result of an assemblage of calculable and predictable risk categories. These stages included the initial assessment for referral, monitoring the young person's project participation and reporting aggregate scores of young people in the annual report to the IYJS.

Project worker Niamh's account of her use of the YLS for example was very instructive in how the YLS was successful in directing project workers' gaze and making the young person instantly knowable to her:

Well like I said, it just came in so it is helpful to, kind of, because you couldn't think that a young person would be involved for alcohol and drugs. It just wouldn't occur to you but when you're actually going through the YLS, you think, well, does he do this, like does he do that, so it is a helpful tool.

Similarly, project worker Michael described his use of the YLS tool, clearly demonstrating how

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<sup>3</sup> Some project workers reported having used the ASSET scale in other work settings. ASSET is an assessment tool widely used in the UK context (e.g. by the Youth Offending Teams) to assess young offenders' needs.

the 'checklist' provided eventually supported him in identifying a young person's problem and generating a solution:

There is a process you follow and it's much easier to identify the needs of the young person by using these tools and formats and analyzing the reasons for them being here and then by using that tool or that format, you might have 15 questions and out of those 15 questions, 14 of them may be irrelevant but one of them just hits the raw nerve and you said well look, why did you answer that particular answer? Why did you give that answer? How do you think we can make changes, right, for the rest of them, for it to have the same effect as the rest of them? That's what I think is happening now, whereas before it was just taking groups together having, presenting a programme for seven to eight people in a group, be it an alcohol or drug programme. It wasn't working because it was like a boys' club. There is a purpose about the project now. More specific, more tailored, more direct, and I think it will have a bigger impact.

Project worker Max, working on a pilot project and enthusiastic about the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), outlined the two-fold purpose of the YLS: information management and deciding levels and areas of support. This actuarialist rationale of 'calculating' where support can be provided was also drawn upon by other JLOs and project workers involved in the pilot phase. This was reminiscent of the 'scaled approach'<sup>4</sup> to youth justice being practiced in the English context. This was often criticised for prioritising certain needs/risk over others according to a system which is not reflective of the young person's self-perceived needs and interest (Sutherland, 2009) and for disproportionately focusing on those young people who were socially disadvantaged (Bateman, 2011). Max's perceived need to 'turn around' the YLS into a strength based assessment, revealed however that for those workers who were positive about it, it was not immediately seen as a strengths-based tool:

I think on two levels it is about managing the information better and I think it's about helping us to focus on where we can impact best and where we need to maybe refer on, or something is beyond our capacity. So if somebody scores quite high in an area and it's not something that we can support, where do we need to look beyond. So it's kind of you could turn it around to being a strength-based assessment. I think you

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<sup>4</sup> The 'scaled approach' to youth justice has been introduced since 2008 to be utilised by Youth Offending Teams in England and Wales. It seeks to promote practice which basis its provision of support and intervention based on a young person's assessed risks and needs (Youth Justice Board, 2012a).

could look at it either way, but I think in that sense it helps to support ourselves in terms of our direction.

Project worker Patrick recollected how the alcohol and public order offending profiles supported him in placing the young person's offending in a wider context. Here, similarly as with the YLS analysis, the project worker's gaze was directed at a number of different factors (the individual young person; their families; their peers and their communities). The origins of the offending were very clearly circumscribed to communities and what happened within them and this was perceived as constituting the 'bigger picture' of youth offending. Arguably, this 'bigger picture' did not however extend to wider issues but seemed to be based on the same individualising rationale offered as reasons and solutions to youthful offending throughout the majority of project workers' accounts (see chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion).

If I got anything it's helping me to look beyond the particular young person. So you're looking not just on him. The young person just doesn't commit a crime. Okay, why does he commit this crime? Let's have a look at family, friends, himself, peers... you are taking the bigger picture, community. You know, if it's acceptable in the community like for example, before the regeneration happened. It was accepted to go around and rob cars, you know, and stuff like that. It was fine. It was seen okay wherein in other communities, it was seen as wrong, you know... I think you have to have understanding of that as well as a worker, so yeah... it's definitely, helped...

Claire, a project worker also outlined how the local youth crime profiles were useful in structuring project activities. What was interesting in her account was that she connected the local youth crime profiles and the increased amount of information on local youth crime with streamlining reporting procedures and intervening at critical times when young people committed crime rather than to try and improve outcomes for young people. By adopting this position, she advocated for what is typically described as environmental or situational crime prevention, which is clearly located in a conservative crime prevention paradigm (White, 2008). Furthermore, her statement was indicative of the primacy of the corporatist agenda where following guidelines and pre-designed formats can become a key goal in itself.

Because it really helps you then to work on your plan... these really are the issues I mean, in location X, again... I suppose we're again slightly different... we might be different than a kind of country project... crime happens everyday...with a slight peak on a Saturday night, so you know, again, having all that information... and then funnily enough crime peaked in the afternoon in the after school time between two and 6 o'clock, so we were kind of saying, look, the after school hours are key to kind of be working so I mean, there was information like that, that would kind of really help you start and build a better picture of what was going on, so all of that statistics and then I think I suppose all of the new, you know, there's a new annual report and new annual plan that are very much linked so you have your annual plan and then your annual report really before that it was a little bit kind of I think everybody did their own thing...

### **Perceived consequences of monitoring**

The impact of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) in relation to monitoring work also became visible in project workers' reiterations of the perceived threat of discontinued funding and uncertainty as to what would happen with the information gathered by the IYJS. Project worker Jessica for example expressed uncertainty as to the new requirements to increase the number of 'primary' project participants':

But then, there's also a difficulty in that 70 to 80% of your work has to be done on primary targets...So, therefore, if you have their friends in, you know, you really have to be very limited with referrals, say from the school and stuff like that because you need to be working with your JLOs because everyone is under the impression that all this paperwork now is because of funding and stuff like that. So, if we don't have 80% referrals from the JLO are they going to be cutting funding.

Similarly, youth work manger Ger highlighted the same concern:

You see...there is a threat there as well... like we're told... if we are not happy with your annual plan ...your funding is based on your annual plan...so there is a lot of fear there.

Project worker Fiona also expressed a lack of clarity with what would happen with the information on young people's offending behaviour:

And so, like, I'd be interested to see, like, if you had 30 young people and they all reoffended while they were on your program, would that be failure on your part, you know? I'm not sure like what youth justice would do with that information, things like that... but I suppose, like I think, there's always an element of defensiveness or kinda, why do you wanna know that or where is this going, or what's the purpose of those, what it's related to when you're supposed, with your reflection, when you're planning and everything else is to get your funding. It's like ... I think that's where uneasiness comes from because if it was within your own workplace or if it was somehow separate, then I think people would be more honest and reflect on the work they're doing. You know, because I think it is linked to funding.

A few workers identified the risk of losing funding or employment if a project or worker was perceived to be troublesome or defiant. This could also explain earlier comments by project workers who felt that they had little choice but to go along with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). In this light, going along with the requirements of the agenda, can be understood more as a pragmatic, rather than a submissive position.

You know we're really scared about losing our jobs. So I'd hate for them to just march up and say 'that's wrong, that's wrong and that's wrong' they'll go, 'Well these are the rules you abide by and if not, then he'll cut funding. And they are like that.' We got a quite stern letter the other day about a report that was sent back twice saying that it's wrong, it's wrong, it's wrong. And then it was discovered that they made the wrong report to fill in.

In Chapter 5, the analysis had suggested that the provision of certain types of training by the IYJS within the framework of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) were deployed as a tool to regulate project worker's identity. As Alvesson and Willmott (2002:630) argue, the transfer of knowledge of skills can be seen as a 'key resources for regulating identity in a corporate context as knowledge defines the knower' (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:630). In addition, project workers focused on certain ways of constructing the young person and their offending behaviour as well as to operationalise the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). During the



interviews, project workers didn't talk extensively about the training programmes associated with the reform process. Some of them perceived the training as information days, given their short nature, whereas others indicated that they sought to not let the learning at these events impact on their work. However, the following two - diametrically opposed – views by project worker Claire, who was a project worker on one of the pilot projects and project worker Oliver, who expressed misgivings about the direction policy was taking projects in recent years, clearly highlighted the polarity that existed among project workers views of what is happening.

Claire: ....And the training that we received in the motivational interviewing and the pro-social behaviour again.....I mean, it's perfect fit with, I mean with what we're doing you know, so the training I mean was just excellent I couldn't praise it highly enough.

Oliver: Like I feel that when I first started this position, the first week we had this like, motivational interviewing and pro-social modelling training, I was like, 'what does that mean?' Do you know what I mean, pro-social, who's idea of pro like, what's pro like? So what there...if you don't, if you're not on that model you're anti-social, do you know what I mean, what does that mean?

Similarly, project workers did not talk in depth about the online learning platform, sometimes commenting on its usefulness to share ideas or access the literature provided. Most commonly however, project workers cited lack of time as the main reason for not making much use of the online platform. In addition, several project workers indicated that they were not comfortable with using the online platform, particularly as it was seen as a top down initiative and not a site where critical or divergent opinions might be safely articulated.

Oliver: They have this forum thing but I don't think this forum is an opportunity for us to actually share information I think it's more I feel like I'm being surveilled to be honest and I feel like that it's just--? There's nothing in, there's no critical thought in that like. And I hope that's not that there is no critical thought.

The *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) introduced several technologies with the aim to engage project workers in the reform agenda. In deploying these particular technologies, specific types of knowledge have been mobilised while others have been silenced. The emphasis placed on

recording and producing evidence of involving the 'right' type of young people in the projects and providing the 'right' kind of activities, which show measurable impacts on offending behaviour, all seek to govern how project workers and JLOs in turn govern young people. Most notably, the deployment of these technologies, has sought to influence how project workers and JLOs construct young people and their offending behaviour through the deployment of apparently 'neutral' assessment tools. Interview findings confirmed that these tools were particularly effective in disciplining the focus of those project workers' who did not draw on an autonomous youth work identity. As such, they are successful in 'conducting the conduct' of project workers and exemplary of how the knowledge-power axis comes into play. However it is important to reiterate tools such as the YLS or the offending profiles are not neutral assessment tools, rather they direct the project workers' gaze in particular directions, which ultimately serve to individualise and problematise the young person under their gaze. Kelly (2011:438) suggested that the 'youth-at-risk' framework for thinking about young people has become so entrenched in the social sciences that it has become an accepted and too often unquestioned way of knowing young people: 'the appearance of evidence-based, scientific representations denies space to other forms of apparently less rigorous, less clear, less practical representations'.

### **Economic rationality and the GYDPs**

Contemporary youth crime prevention policy and GYDP discourse is imbued with the new 'economic style of reasoning' typical of advanced liberal governance regimes (see Chapter 5). Tracing the rise of this new economic rationale across criminal justice systems, Garland (2001:188) observed that 'the practitioners of crime control and criminal justice are required to talk the economic language of 'cost-benefit', 'best value' and 'fiscal responsibility'. Managerialism.....has flowed into the vacuum created when the more substantive, more positive content of the old social approach lost credibility'. The *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) further intensified this focus on economic rationality at several levels and in a way it formed the underlying ethos behind the entire range of innovations introduced through the *Agenda of Change*. These included the increased focus on accountability of projects through the introduction of new reporting mechanisms, the introduction of actuarialist techniques such as the YLS and the promotion of interventions with young people, which promise traceable outcomes. It is important to see these actuarialist changes, as indeed one project worker also noted, in the overall context of an increasing 'audit culture' (Power, 1994) across

public services more generally. The discourse of 'economic rationality' emerged particularly strong in project workers' rationalisations of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) process and in relation to evidence-based practice promoted in the change process.

Nearly all project workers at some stage during the interviews sought to explain the necessity for the reform process initiated by the IYJS or at least to demonstrate an understanding of it, by drawing on a discourse of accountability and 'value for money'. References to this perceived need for increased accountability on the projects' behalf were often placed in the context of the recession and the size of total project expenditure. JLO Gavin for example sought to explain the need for accountability from the position of the IYJS. He argued that the level of funding justified a more tightly controlled referral process. Gavin drew on the intertwined discourse of accountability and 'evidence-led' practice, both promoted at policy level by the IYJS. He argued that the high level of funding meant, that the expectation to have a clear logic connecting young people, their crime(s) and an intervention which works, was justifiable.

But when you have a budget of that nature [€14.5 million] you have to be able to justify that level of funding. And in order to do that, you have to have some kind of a structure and that's where if you're referring – if you have a referral process that is aggressively targeting the people then the idea would be... is that, we have the crime being committed, we have the people committing the crime, and then we have the intervention of the use of the projects to try to influence the crime.

Similarly, project worker Marian also sought to explain the increased emphasis on accountability from the perspective of the Irish Youth Justice Service:

And it's very understandable as well why they are doing that because, they need to justify why they're funding us because, you know, obviously the Department is going to be saying there's this much anti social behaviour happening, what is Irish Youth Justice Service doing about it, what is the project in X doing about it. So it has to be the number crunching game to a certain extent because, that's what funders look for.

Project worker Aaron who throughout his interview was adamant about distinguishing project work from youth work and often commented critically on what he perceived as 'youth

workers'' unwillingness to fully embrace the change process, suggested that 'generic youth work' in the context of diversion work would be a 'waste of money'. The pervasiveness of the 'accountability' discourse also became evident when looking at accounts of project workers and JLOs, who were more critical of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). However, while they accommodated the discourse of accountability at its core, they also reflected on its limiting and possible negative effects. This was for example the case with project worker Jessica:

I think yeah and the way it's going with paperwork, I think it is vital to have paper work. Don't get me wrong like you need some sort of this system where everyone is working from and measuring the outcomes and looking after aims and objectives and stuff like that where we work from and you do need that...but not to measure young people.

Similarly, JLO Peter sought to explain the IYJS's emphasis on accountability, while questioning whether it was going too far.

It seems to be a nightmare at the moment, and like, and if they're going to end up being administrators instead of youth workers, that's ridiculous like absolutely. I know the Irish Youth Justice Services are kind of, how to say? They kind of aim to have the diversion projects all linked in with the kids that are cautioned, plus the secondary referrals and that they're trying to tighten up on what's happening in there and they're trying to justify each project because of funding. So I can see where they're coming from but it's just seems to be going overboard, like, you know.

These accounts of increased administrative functions are according to Rose (1999) symptomatic of crime control in advanced liberal societies:

Control workers, whether they be police or psychiatrists, thus have a new administrative function- the administration of the marginalia, ensuring community protection through the identification of the riskiness of individuals, actions, forms of life and territories. Hence the increasing emphasis on case conferences, multidisciplinary teams, sharing information, keeping records, making plans, setting

targets, establishing networks for the surveillance and documentation of the potentially risky individual on the territory of the community (Rose, 1999:333).

An additional aspect in relation to increased burden of administration was raised by project worker Matthew, one of the project workers most uneasy about the changes introduced. While he also expressed an understanding for increased levels of reporting etc., he suggested that the increased emphasis on accountability was changing the orientation of the projects towards 'soft policing'.

So, I can see why it [the introduction of new reporting procedures, preparation of business and logic statements] would be important for, you know, databases and stuff like that and, you know, if someone comes in tomorrow and says, 'Matthew, since you started here, have the crime figures gone up or down?' Or something like that and I need to justify my work it could be useful that way.. Accountability is what they're looking for everything and I understand that it's needed. I suppose the biggest change for me personally that I see is that they're getting...they want us to not divert young people from crime but fix crime and that's what ...where the change is coming from. That's exactly what they want to do. They want us to fix the crime like become like the guards or probation workers and that's not what we are. We couldn't do it. I'm not going go out and stand on the street and say lads you are committing an offence there, move on, cop on 'cause that's basically what they are asking us to do.

Matthew's observation was insightful insofar as he made explicit the link between changes in administrative functions to the underlying rationale of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), which is the transformation of the GYDPs into narrowly targeted youth crime reduction initiatives. This realisation allowed him to clearly distance himself from this perceived expectation.

### **Evidence based interventions**

This thesis showed earlier (see chapter 5) how an increased focus on risk-assessing young people and monitoring the results of their involvement in project activities was promoted through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The overall goal of this strategy was to bring projects in line with the official youth crime prevention discourse. An additional aspect of this

emphasis was the continuing quest to achieve more 'effective' outcomes while not increasing the investment in projects. This rationality contributes to the never-ending quest for increased accountability and the collection of 'evidence' on the one hand, as well as promoting 'evidence-led practice' on the other. This logic is increasing its reach further and further into areas, such as 'relationships', which could so far escape the reach of measurement. In a conversation conducted in preparation for this research for example an IYJS official showed interest in project workers' views on how the 'quality of relationships' could be assessed by funders.<sup>5</sup> The voluntary Irish youth work sector in general – at least at official policy level - has not been able to provide an effective counter-discourse to this logic. This is for example evidenced by the study commissioned by several youth work organisations aimed to input into the development of the Quality and Standards Framework for the youth work sector (Devlin and Gunning, 2009).

Indeed, the discourse around 'evidence-based' interventions within the framework of the GYDPs emerged strongly with many workers expressing the hope that it could provide them direction with how to focus their work on the one hand and how to 'prove' what they have been doing on the other hand. Aaron's account for example carried the hope that workers could assess whether their interventions have actually worked. Aaron effectively described how assessment tools supported decision making in terms of how much attention an individual young person required, which, as argued above, strongly resembled the 'scaled' approach to youth justice.

They [project participants] were assessed in March. They are going to try to do it again in July and August to see if there's going to be a change, because there still a few interventions put in and does... that should actually make a difference. But the majority will be made in time. Probably, the YLS has been good because, I suppose it gives you...it is more structured focus. We had the ASSET, kind of profile thing but that's was quite lengthy. So, the YLS is quite good. It keeps us focused. And actually, it kind of says look that if you look at this, we have this fellow for a year and he's actually quite lowdown, I suppose, we always had each young person would have so many hours in a week roughly of how we'd give them. The higher needs, the higher the hours. And the YLS section has showed us that maybe one or two guys we were

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<sup>5</sup> Interview conducted by the researcher with an Irish Youth Justice Service Official, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2009.

giving time and there wasn't any need to give them that much time. So, it kind of helped us become more focused and on who we were.

Aaron's final sentence was particularly indicative of how the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) worked effectively as an identity project, seeking to shift project workers from youth work or other professional backgrounds to very concrete youth justice work.

Patrick, a project worker stated that tracking a young person over time would be another way of showing the positive impact a project can make in the life of a young person. His statement suggested an acceptance of the 'evidence' based agenda, including a lack of reflection on the implications of gathering more information on young people's lives and movements with the aim to devise more interventions.

... unfortunately it's very hard to show that [a small success like cleaning up after playing pool] ... and especially when we do the report around motivational interviewing and pro-social modelling... but we would love to measure young people's strengths and weaknesses periodically... Realistically because you're trying to track a particular young person's behaviour, like we've looked at them, strengths and weakness questions and looked at that. Something that I think I would love to use but I think down there Irish Youth Justice Service are looking at it, so that might be something it might be great way of tracking particularly a young person over a year or whatever way you want to do it. We have nothing like that there. There's nothing there realistically, there's nothing that you can, you know...

The strong emphasis and hope placed, particularly by project workers, on 'evidence-led' practice, demonstrated how official youth crime prevention discourse has taken hold at local level. Reflective of the quest for ontological security in terms of professional identity and practice (see above and Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:686), the appeal of the 'evidence-based' paradigm seeks to offer a practical strategy to project workers to solve the challenges of justifying their different levels and types of involvement with young people. Biesta (2010:497) aptly referred to this reliance on programmes and tools which are understood as being able to assess, track and document outcomes and demystify complex human interactions and relationships as 'complexity reduction'.

## **Contestation of the evidence-led agenda**

Interestingly however, ‘cracks’ in the certainty around the evidence-led agenda did emerge in the interviews, notably, when project workers were asked how they thought they could prove and demonstrate the impacts and success stories of their work in the context of the GYDPs. Many of the responses provided by project workers were similar to those identified by Devlin and Gunning (2009). In their study, nearly every youth worker stated how difficult and nearly impossible it was to measure ‘small’ success stories, such as the positive relationships built up between youth workers and young people. However, in suggesting several possibilities for approximating ‘measurement’, they had in common similar ideas as identified by project workers in this study: checking records of attendance in various programmes, participating in and observing project work on the ground; involving young people as active participants to report on their involvement and subjective experiences of outcomes on their lives/offending behaviour.

Overall however, project workers expressed a number of doubts and uncertainties with regards to the question of ‘evidence-based’ practice. On the most basic level, these related to the difficulty of recording and demonstrating ‘small success’ stories as well as linking them explicitly to reducing offending behaviour. In her account of challenges she faced with reporting, project worker Sophie pointed to one of the fundamental flaws underlying the ‘evidence-based’ agenda: how could one assume causality between a certain intervention or activity and the desired outcome, i.e. reduced offending behaviour? She also implied that this was contrary to her organisation’s (a large national youth work organisation) philosophy.

You can’t really. I can’t put that on the paper, no. I know that it has come up a lot of times at various Irish youth justice seminars on the time spent getting to know a person. You know, getting to know what makes him tick, what sets him off, what are they good at, what do they need support? I find that I just can’t seem to be able to document it or put it on paper....I mean, we have this trouble with meeting the criteria of our funders as well as dealing with the organisation’s philosophy that leads us and working within that for our own organisation. So, it kind of quite confusing...you know, you have to put across... You’re justifying how you are going to reduce crime. It is very difficult or to document on your report on that. You know how to say. How does soccer reduce crime? Okay, that one we can do but the other stuff, like spending



time with a child? Cooking or something, they might say how was that...? You know what I mean... it's not okay, here's a sheet of paper. You fill this in. You fill in that. Sometimes, it's not documented...You know, there is no evidence, hard-based evidence to say we've done this and that element.'

Similarly, project worker Jessica emphasised how it was the 'small things' which defined a project's success and how they could not be easily measured. She also highlighted how the emphasis on measuring the project's work, had to do with an increased focus of ensuring that projects actually contribute to youth crime reduction.

It's hard to put on paper like it's—it's all about the process of working with the young people and stuff like that. In that value, if the project was to be measured today on paperwork, you know, it doesn't really contribute to the work that's being done. It doesn't really ... do justice for the work being done on the ground. The practical side of it would really need to be measured as opposed to the theory side, you know...but I think they're trying to see if it's value for money like, are the young people reoffending or is the project doing its job.

Project worker Nancy also suggested that 'small' success stories of personal development as well as their relation to reduced offending behaviour were not amenable to official record.

So, we go and set up counselling for them, we do a bit of one-to-one work. We build up their communication skills. They would be very quiet. We taught them communication skills that has no place in the report. There is no outcome there. This person is more self-confident. They come in and say, 'hi,' as supposed, to come in and hang their head and sit in the corner. You can't write that down...If this person is less likely to commit crime now. So there is no really place for that.

In these instances, project workers very clearly differentiated between the demands made on them by the IYJS in terms of recording project activities and impacts and the realities of their daily work practice with young people.

A second gap of 'evidence-based' practice was highlighted by project worker Oliver. He narrated how the 'evidence' provided in local youth crime profiles wouldn't be helpful to him

in actual project practice. This resonated with what Sampson and Themelis (2009) confirmed in their study on the application of risk assessments in social work settings. They identified that 'aggregate data' provided on young people did not support workers in their actual work. At a deeper level, Oliver's account was also reflective of what Biesta (2010) has termed the 'knowledge deficit of evidence-based practice'. He argued that evidence-based research was per definition and in very practical terms based on 'relationships between actions and consequences that have occurred in the past' which could not 'provide us with rules for action and even less with dictates for action.... In this regard the so-called 'knowledge-base' for practice is never sufficient and never will be sufficient' (Biesta, 2010: 496).

It [local youth crime profile] helps me to fill out forms. That's it. If I'm honest, that's it.... There could be a lot of theft in this area, but that doesn't mean that that's the young people that we have in the project, do you know what I mean. It doesn't.... 'Cause I see the way crimes come in like, these crimes could happen in 2010. Sometimes by the time, the guards get the paperwork together then the paperwork goes to the JLO... then she makes house calls. Then they come to us and then we start to try and engage them. Sure like, so then you can look at these crime statistics then they don't actually...'cause I know how slow the system works...

Biesta also highlighted another fallacy of the 'evidence-led' paradigm, which he termed the 'efficacy deficit'. He explained how social systems had to be conceptualised as open systems, where it was simply not possible to conceptualise interventions in a 'cause-effect' modality: 'Human individuals have the capacity to think, which means that they can alter their behaviour on the basis of their interpretations and understanding rather than only as the result of physical 'push and pull' (Biesta, 2010: 497). Project worker Fiona alluded to this 'efficacy deficit' in describing the demand placed on projects to track offending behaviour:

...like I can understand in some way that they might want to know that but it's not necessarily helpful because at the end of the day, we have little or no control over whether a young person's offends again and we can like, we can try and help them.

Similarly project worker Davina also highlighted how cause and effect between the project intervention and reduced offending were impossible to distinguish, also adding a 'value' component to his statement, that this would also not be desirable.

Oh no, it's really, it's really difficult... [proving outcomes to funders]. We could go look at the crime figures and the crime figures since I've been working here. But crime figures have gone up because there's a recession. Also the way that crime is reported is changed. So the figures will go up and I don't want to start dragging the kids I work with to conferences and go, 'Look at these. They're well adjusted young kids [now]. They were rubbish last week.' You know, it's really hard...hard to do it. And I understand and I do...I do understand we do have to justify what we're doing but not by facts, not by figures on the crime sheet. So yeah, it is difficult.

In a way, project worker Davina's mention on how the recession would impact crime figures, also unravelled the logic of the IYJS, which remains limited in terms of locating the causes and solutions to offending with the individual young person and the culture of their families and communities.

Finally the interview findings revealed that there was relatively little discourse about possible alternatives to 'evidence-based' tools such as those introduced by the IYJS. In search for alternatives to individualising and by default 'deficiency focused' assessment tools, an increasing body of literature is suggesting to change terminology and ultimately the conceptualisation of young people's offending behaviour (Sampson and Themelis, 2009; te Riele 2006) towards a new paradigm which allows issues of social inequality to emerge and to conceptualise offending behaviour as a 'solution to problems'. Attention to the introduction of more participatory and less static frameworks, which could include 'biography' and narratives of young people in the process, are also increasingly coming to the fore (Baker and Kelly, 2011). Given the lack of attention paid to ideas such as these in official project discourse, it is then not surprising, that only one project worker indicated an awareness of possible alternatives. In her account, she highlighted the advantages of the 'Rickter-Scale'<sup>6</sup> – a person-centred self-assessment tool. She suggested that if young people should be 'profiled at all', it should be on the principles of participation and self-evaluation:

But obviously the risk assessment tool is very like, individual like or looks at like, you

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<sup>6</sup>The 'Rickter Scale' is an interactive assessment system where participants indicate through positioning items on a hand-held interactive board, to indicate their feelings, views, attitudes on certain issues. The scale is being used in different settings, including with people with disabilities, in family settings, social work settings, etc. (Rickter Company, 2012).

know, have they two or more offending behaviours whereas [with the Rickter scale] it would be more like 'where would you put yourself on the scale, you know, cause like sure if I put them on... like that's what the Rickter scale does... you don't touch the boards at all... You know, you would like, it's very much for them take ownership of where they would put themselves.

From a poststructuralist perspective, the application of such tools would however not remove their very logic based on making the young person 'known' and 'governable', but only offer another avenue of collecting the desired information. In the broader context of an 'audit culture' (Power, 1994) in public services- also in the Irish context (see e.g. McNamara et. al) - it was not surprising that the discourse of accountability was so central to project workers' and JLO's rationalisations of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The fact that the concept was drawn upon also by those project workers uneasy with the changes, who while trying to point out its limitations, nevertheless accepted the importance of the concept, was indicative of the 'doxic status' (O'Sullivan, 2005) which the role of evidence-based interventions has gained.

### **Working with young people**

The interview data demonstrated how the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) had concrete impacts in terms of working with young people. The policy has contributed very effectively to transform project workers' priorities, in several instances, from interventions based on young people's needs towards a focus on the perceived need to control youth crime. Several project workers reported how they based their work plans on logic models which in turn were based on crime profiles of the specific area. This focus on basing the work with young people on local crime profiles was a significant change of rationale of practice with young people. Project worker Niamh for example described how youth crime profiles clearly informed programme selection. Her statement also demonstrated how the requirement for project workers to take a closer look at crime profiles focused on particularly individualising explanations of youth crime. Young people were 'tempted' to engage in petty theft by the abundance of opportunities for consumption.

We got our report in December of last year's crime and each year we'll continue to do that, but we found out from the local gardai that theft was our main concern here. There were a lot of reasons why it was. Because we'd have the local shopping center,

we'd have local shops around, we have public transport that brings the young people straight into town or straight up to the square. So, it is easy access for them. And now theft would be local shop theft to trespassing, you know, going into someone's house to actually take something, to actually taking someone's phone off while they're walking down the road. So there is a variety of theft there that it's not just in the local shops. It does help us because it would kind of shape our year or what programmes we are going to do. We try to do programmes around the crimes that the young people commit. So like that for example, the theft was very high last year so we're doing the Crime Awareness Programme.

Similarly, project worker Claire- a project worker on one of the pilot projects- suggested that more 'focused programmes' were helpful in analysing if projects were achieving the desired behavioural change with young people in a more timely way. It provided the impetus to make young people aware of their reasons for engagement which related to their offending behaviour only.

And maybe in the past there had been kind of more of the general stuff, even though we were doing bits and pieces of the offending behaviour, but the main focus was kind of maybe a little bit more blurred, whereas now I think we are moving towards more focused interventions that are exactly targeting the young people that we have on the projects. I think it's more helpful, well it's definitely helpful for us because it kinda gives you more focused interventions and then you're able to say either I am achieving some of this or I am not, so it's easier to kinda maybe in the long run maybe to measure and but I think it's useful, I mean, I think for the young people themselves that is very important that to know actually why they are engaged in the project...You know, they're not here just to kinda have a good time, I mean they are ..... but they do need to know that the reason they're here is because they are in trouble and that the project is actually here to work with them to say, right, you know, if you are constantly getting in trouble you know, either robbing cars or robbing shops or whatever it is the nature of it. That that's what the project is actually there for to work with you on that, to see can we make any changes.

However, some project workers' were wary of this more prescriptive way of working with young people. Project worker Davina was very outspoken on how she did not agree with the

*Agenda of Change's* (IYJS, 2009b:61) impact on his work with young people:

I think they're trying to make us go more into crime control ...because we got to get the stats of when the crime happens, what date happens, what type of crime it is. We have to give our programmes around looking at the stats on what they are doing... That's how the guards work....Ridiculous idea...

Oliver, another project worker, suggested that the increased emphasis on the delivery of pre-designed programmes ran counter to the youth work ethos of focusing on young people's needs as defined by them in their initial engagements with project workers. He reiterated how his identity as a youth worker was central to his practice and how the demands made on him by the IYJS would put him in a difficult situation.

And if we are being told, these are the crime statistics, these are the programmes that need to run, where is the active participation in that sense as well ...you know if I start with the group I'd always say: what are you interested in, what are the needs... but then now I also have the annual plan at the back of my mind ...'right, we said on the annual plan..I have to do alcohol and drugs at some stage..' so how do I fit that in at some stage and the needs of the young people as well...they didn't even say that's something they're interested in ...so I'm nearly trying to manipulate this relationship I have with them... so it's a very fine line... you are trying to keep both sides happy you know...and be true to what youth work is...Because I want to be a youth worker first of all...

Where the re-focusing of priorities within the GYDPS became particularly problematic was where project workers indicated in an unreflective manner how they got directly involved in extending an overt social control agenda on behalf of other juridicial agencies. It was where this critical distance was missing from the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) perspective, it seemed that the respective worker had been successfully 'aligned' or 'responsibilised' into the change process. However, this seemed to be more problematic if approached from a perspective which focuses on young people's needs. Michael, a project worker on a GYDP engaged in a pilot programme showed how he was involved for example in the production of the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b), looking specifically at local youth crime profiles, which is now required to be completed for the preparation of annual plans.

This particular analysis was about like four years ago. Yeah. I remember sitting over in this small office over there we sat down... I'm born, bred and raised here...So, I knew where they drank, I knew who purchased it for them, when it was purchased. I could nearly tell you who would be drunk. And how many pints they drink. So, it was a huge benefit from the project for me to be working with him. Plus, for me, a huge benefit for the people because I would be helping them.

This was not to suggest Michael revealed any personal information regarding individual young people. However, it was telling that a project worker would be so uncritically engaged in a clearly criminological exercise. Michael's statement was also indicative as to how the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b), initiating the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) put local knowledge at the disposal of agencies, who had a clear social control remit. More generally, this revealed how some project workers have become '...instrumentalised governmentally in the name of.....the control or elimination of criminality, delinquency and anti-social conduct' (Rose, 2000:324). This repositioning of different professionals is not a new phenomenon. Rather, according to Rose (2000) the process is symptomatic of how the criminal justice system has been organised since the mid-nineteenth century.

Project worker Una, who came from a social care professional background, elaborated how she prepared a variety of very detailed reports on the project participants and which were seen by other agencies, including probation services and courts. Una emphasised how she was 'clear' and 'honest' with young people, clearly spelling out their responsibility as participants of the projects: they were creating their own 'court' reports through the behaviour they showed during their participation in the project. While this is only relevant for those young people who ultimately have to go to court, this practice of project workers writing reports for court, even if they are written in support of the young person's case, has also revealed ( as discussed in Chapter 6) the potential implications for 'up-tariffing'. It also showed however how project workers functioned as 'control workers' who participated in the administrative function of 'the administration of the marginalia' (Rose, 2000:333).

Within the project, we took a stand of our recording or just everything. It was to cover your own ass.....Especially with the people we were working with, they were all high risk. They'd all be known to social services or the gardai or they'd be on the borderline because most of them would be the 16-17 age bracket. Social workers really wouldn't

engage too much with them so we took over the role of their schooling, the parenting, and just encouraging them especially with their offending. We did the recording. We'd write reports for court. We'd write concern reports if we had concerns regarding members of families so on and so forth. We adopted most of them to this role. We say that when they come that they write their own court report. It's their behaviour, it's their participation, it's their willingness or their lack of willingness that goes into the court report ... So, ultimately, every evening or every second or third evening, we try to write up the file of contacts for the week. When we need to write a court report, our report for the JLO or the guards, it's literally broadly looking back on their own behaviour... We always tell them [the young people] that we're not going to lie. We're not going to write something that did not happen. So they're accepting enough of it... If it's within the first one or two visits or first one or two meetings, if we need a court report, you'll write your court report. So, it's stated to them from the very beginning. It's only if they are going to court, ultimately. At the moment, the guards have been assigned a new system of a case manager so sometimes the case manager might want just to report on how things are going or to get into treatment, things like that. Mainly, the court report is for very few of them or to get into new schools and colleges and things, stuff like that.

In their inquiry into British youth work, Merton and Davies (2009:12) identified that the sharing of information was one of the biggest pressures faced by youth workers in the settings of 'targeted' youth work. They identified how a few workers only managed to resist this pressure, in a climate which was predominantly concerned with child protection at the expense of prioritising the confidential and trusting relationship between youth workers and young people. It remains to be seen, how this culture further develops in the context of the GYDPs and to what extent it becomes a significant issue for voluntary youth organisations participating in GYDP provision.

Although the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was not yet fully implemented at the time of my research, the data demonstrates the impacts it was having on work practices. Through their combined tools and technologies it was contributing to successfully transforming the projects into youth crime control projects, notably in those examples where project workers welcomed the initiative or offered little resistance. In other instances, there yet seems to remain enough room to manoeuvre for those youth workers who resist the redirection of



projects towards becoming targeted youth crime prevention projects.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed project workers' and JLOs' engagement with the major reforms introduced through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), resulting in a complex picture as to the variety of effects achieved by these changes. The introduction of new reporting mechanisms for example seemed to fill a leadership vacuum and was therefore positively welcomed by many project workers. At the same time however, this pragmatism simultaneously left little space for reflection on the impacts of these changed reporting criteria on the very core of the work going on in the projects. Only in some instances, did project workers critically assess how these new criteria excluded certain types of activities or young people (those not fulfilling the criteria). In these cases however, project workers found creative ways of circumventing reporting requirements, indicating that the exertion of power as productive, even in those cases where it was met with resistance. Project workers' experience with the piloting exercise and the corresponding deployment of the discourse of 'partnership' were characterised by their diversity. All of those project workers and JLOs who participated in the first phase of the piloting process as well as some others felt that the piloting process acknowledged their input and created a form of partnership between them and the Irish Youth Justice Service. In these instances, the piloting process was entirely successful in terms of enjoining agreement amongst the involved parties. This was even more evident in those cases, where some project workers and JLOs took on the role of 'champions' of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), explaining and defending the introduction of reforms. On the other hand, several project workers adopted a rather pragmatist approach to dealing with the required changes, referring to the threat of discontinued funding. These included the official expression of agreement with the introduced changes, while maintaining room for continuing with project work as before. The analysis of interview data also showed how the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) sought to govern project workers' and JLOs' engagement with young people by drawing their attention to risk-based frameworks for categorising young people and their reasons for offending behaviour. In doing so, the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was successful in excluding alternative visions of young people, as will also be elaborated in more detail in the chapter 8 of this thesis. This chapter also traced how dominant policy discourses were perpetuated through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) and what repercussions this had on project workers' and JLO's discursive practice. It was striking to see how the discourse of economic rationality and accountability promoted in

official policy discourse was reproduced by a wide range of project workers and JLOs. Here it was evident how influential and uncontested these concepts have become. Cracks emerged however, when looking at the discussion of more tangible factors in relation to producing 'evidence' of successful work. Here, project workers and JLOs drew upon several pertinent critiques of the 'evidence-based' discourses. Finally, the analysis of project interviews also showed how very particular ways of knowing young people and their families were mutually reinforced by official policy and project workers and JLOs, which at certain times led to the 'intensification'<sup>7</sup> of truth regimes. In these instances, the successful redirection of projects towards targeted youth crime prevention projects became evident. In addition, engaging in practices typically associated with more controlling professional groups seemed to be further legitimised by the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). Only a few project workers- namely those who throughout their interviews drew upon a more autonomous worker identity- expressed more critical distance from the overall direction that the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) was taking.

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<sup>7</sup> This draws upon O'Sullivan's (2005:38) conceptualisation of policy paradigms. He describes 'intensification' of dominant policy paradigms as the process where dominant policy paradigms are 'filled in' and therefore 'intensified' by actors other than those who have originally promoted and advocated the paradigm.

## Chapter 8

### An analysis of discursive constructions of young people and their offending behaviour

#### Introduction

One of the central questions of this research is to establish how project workers and JLOs discursively construct young people and their offending behaviour in the context of official youth crime prevention policy and GYDP project discourse. Through the analysis of contemporary youth crime prevention policy and GYDP discourse, I demonstrated how young people were relegated to the margins in the process of policy formulation; constructed as passive service recipients to be managed and contained; made known through a limited range of risk factors; and their offending behaviour explained as the result of internal challenges and other factors remaining at the levels of the individual and familial and removed from the context of social disadvantage.

This chapter explores how these dominant discursive constructions are reflected in project workers' and JLOs' narratives of young people and their offending behaviour. More specifically, this chapter demonstrates through close analysis of interview data how 'confident characterisations' (Lesko, 1996) about adolescence and its foundations in biology and psychology converge with the efforts of contemporary GYDP policy to mobilise behavioural change as a core element of intervention. My analysis also suggests that narratives of young people and their offending behaviour used by project workers and JLOs are related to 'origin stories' (Griffin, 1993) of 'juvenile delinquency', which ultimately objectify young people as victims of a variety of internal and external factors influencing their offending behaviour. Informed by research on the representation of young people and offending, this chapter will demonstrate how young people's 'potential' is constructed through an emphasis on the 'entrepreneurial' self and a rather narrow understanding of young people as citizens conceived mainly in terms of access to education and employment (Griffin, 1993, Kelly, 2006). Not surprisingly, this emphasis mirrors the discourses which are commonly found to characterise the predominant thinking about young people in terms of risk factors and are foundational elements of a 'new governance of youth crime'<sup>1</sup> (Gray, 2009: 443). Importantly, the site of intervention in contemporary youth crime is the transformation of young people's attitudes,

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<sup>1</sup> Gray describes how in the 'new governance of youth crime', every step of the youth justice system removes youth crime from its structural contexts and focuses on stigmatising young people through their criminal status without any consideration of their socio-economic status.

awareness and other 'internal' concepts through technologies of 'ethical reconstruction' (Rose, 2000b:321). The focus for intervention is placed on the body and the 'soul' of the young person (Rose, 2000a).

This chapter will show how the discourse of social and cultural deficiencies drawn upon by project workers and JLOs extends to young people's families and localities through the deployment of discursive 'othering' strategies. These strategies contribute to creating an image of young people's families and localities as bleak and hopeless places and serve to justify the 'family' as a new site of intervention in the context of the GYDPs. In line with existing research (Gerwitz, 2010; Holt 2010; Ilan, 2007) I suggest that these conceptualisations of young people's families and localities reaffirm the GYDPs' contemporary focus on young people and their families guided by principals which Nicholas Rose has conceived as 'ethical reconstruction' (Rose, 2000b:321). Finally, this chapter will identify alternative explanations of youthful offending offered by project workers and JLOs. In this task, my analysis will show how project workers and JLOs position young people in relation to societal constraints, partly related to essentialising ideas about their 'youth' and partly due to their positions as 'urban outcasts'<sup>2</sup> (Wacquant, 1993). Critically, the chapter will illustrate how these accounts demonstrate a lack of 'hope' among project workers to address the societal constraints impacting on the GYDP participants, an outcome that chimes with the current policy and practice imperative of the GYDPs. As a result, the focus of intervention in the GYDPs becomes the body, soul and mind of the young person.

### **Young people and their offending behaviour: different variations of individual problematisations**

Close analysis of the collected interview data revealed that project workers and JLOs repeatedly drew upon 'confident characterisations' (Lesko, 1996) when describing young people they engaged with on the projects. These can be described as assumptions and unquestioned definitions about young people which are discursively deployed to explain their offending behaviour. The analysis of the data found that these characterisations fell into two categories: those, which focused on the related discourses of cognitive and behaviourist

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<sup>2</sup> Wacquant (1993) describes at the example of disadvantaged urban areas of Chicago and Paris, how 'urban outcasts' are created through a combination of the withdrawal from the state and markets and the concurrent stigmatisation of its residents. His fundamental argument is that social exclusion under neo-liberal terms does not foster a shared identity amongst those affected as maybe in previous generations.

psychology, developmentalism and bio-determinism; and those which sought to rationalise young people's offending behaviour as related to social and cultural deficiencies. The latter category in particular was frequently expanded to include young people's families and their localities. As I will demonstrate in detail below, both categories had in common a focus on locating offending behaviour as an outcome of individual traits, shortcomings and rational decision making of young people and their families. As a result, young people were paradoxically positioned both as victims of certain circumstances and traits and at the same time blamed for making the wrong choices and engaging in misconduct.

What appeared throughout the interviews was that project workers and JLO's described young people's reasons for offending with different degrees of certainties. On the one hand, there were several interview participants who presented themselves as diagnosticians of young people's problems, with the solution at hand to fix them. Project worker Michael for example saw it as his task to identify young people's 'reasons' for offending behaviour, and applying a 'remedy' to it:

And as I said, there is a reason for these young people being referred to the project, so identifying the needs of the individual. And some people might need major surgery. Another people might need just a plaster. And, again, as I say focus on the reason they're referred to the project and work towards finding out what the reasons are for them offending.

Michael's use of medical language was instructive, as diseases have all too often become associated with individual failures and shortcomings (Sontag, 1987). In drawing upon this pathologising language, both the young people, as well as the project worker are imagined in particular ways, i.e. as the 'patient' and as the 'doctor', foreclosing other subject positions, which could draw on a more egalitarian relationship between young people and project workers.

At the other end of the spectrum, Gavin, a representative of a JLO, rejected how project workers and projects more generally were idealised as those being able to identify young people's issues: 'traditionally youth workers have been asked to work with children but it's nothing...there's nothing to say that they're doing the right thing...we [as a project] don't even

have access to all those professionals, for the kids we send to the project. So, how are we supposed to know what's wrong'?

The focus on individualised explanations of offending behaviour relegates alternative explanations of youth crime related to social and economic constraints and opportunities to the background (Garland, 2001; Gray, 2009). However, project workers and JLOs did also draw on alternative discourses of offending behaviour, and I will demonstrate how both discourses were interwoven in the interviews, and discuss the implications of these combinations. However, at this stage, it is important to analyse these categories separately, as the interview data also showed that 'confident characterisations' served the state's agenda (i.e. advanced liberal youth crime prevention discourse) which is to normalise individualising interventions with young people. Alternative visions of working with young people were limited by the realist response adopted by those project workers, who revealed themselves to be more attentive to young people's situatedness.

### **The discourse of cognitive developmentalism**

The interview data demonstrated how project workers and JLOs frequently drew on concepts which can be located within the psychologising discourse of cognitive developmentalism (France, 2000). 'Adolescence' is within this framework seen as a 'natural' state of development which presents certain challenges stemming from different factors internal to the young person. This discourse is drawn upon and popularised for example in the risk factor prevention paradigm. This is the case in relation to the area of youth justice but other 'problematisations' of 'adolescence' as well (drug use, teenage pregnancies etc.). Factors are seen to be located in the individual cognitive and psychological realm of the young person, such as low intelligence, personality flaws, and lack of empathy or higher than 'normal' degrees of impulsivity. These were central to defining 'risk factors' predisposing young people to involvement in what is seen as problematic behaviour (see e.g. Farrington and Welsh, 2008).

Project worker Niamh in her explanation of the priorities of 'youth crime prevention' for example accorded central importance to teaching young people empathy and to reduce their impulsivity because for her opinion, these are the factors which best explained their offending behaviour.

I think that working on a Garda Youth Diversion Project the objective mainly would be to, kind of, prevent the crime that they commit or even to reduce the impulsivity of going out to rob a car or to sell drugs or whatever that the crime maybe, so, we'd also do a lot like, around, you know, the empathy for their victim, so maybe put the young person in the shoes of their victim to say like, imagine that was your mother or your sister whose home was being robbed.

The term 'impulsivity' was telling, since it implied a psychological gesture, not tempered by rationality. Notably, this was also a central concern in the current *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), as exemplified amongst others in the different Alcohol and Public Order Offending Profiles prepared as an outcome of the *Baseline Analysis* (see Appendix 8/Profile 3) and various interventions suggested to 'reduce their [young people's] potential for impulsivity and develop improved genuine empathy, which in turn may encourage the young person to think twice about offending' (IYJS, 2009b: 47).

Similarly, project worker Aaron, when asked what he considered the main reasons for young people's offending behaviour, cited the lack of empathy and a lack of reflection on their behaviour (as is implied in her statement 'they don't see their behaviour as a problem') as explanatory factors of offending behaviour.

They're [project participants] very, somewhat, present a lack of empathy and they don't really see their behaviour as a problem. They don't see a victim....

Aaron's use of the verb 'to present' was also interesting in this context, as 'presenting with a problem' is commonly used in medical or policing contexts and notably also in official GYDP policy discourse. The presence of the psychologising discourse of youth and youthful offending was also evidenced by the use of psychological terminology throughout the interviews. Another JLO Gavin's use of the term 'trigger' also showed how the use of psychological terminology has become so engrained in every day talk. Gavin suggested that offending was a 'personality trait' of some young people. At the same time he implied that this pushed young people into deciding to engage in offending behaviour. Gavin's explanation of youthful offending as evidenced in the following extract was replete with contradictions, where he attributed offending to youth impulsivity on the one hand and a rational analysis on the other ('I *want* to engage in dangerous activity'):

... they have that personality trait that whatever triggers their...whatever their personality triggers are, they have the trigger that says, "I want to engage in dangerous activity. I want to be a thrill seeker," or, "I want to push the boundaries or I'm..." the only thing that occupies me is getting into bother. It is a characteristic that they have and, you know, you'd meet the family and there's five kids in the family and 4 of them are perfect and one of them has this, this little behaviour or whatever it is.

### **Biomedical discourses**

Project workers' accounts of young people's offending behaviour were also littered with terms most associated with the distinct, yet related discourse of biomedicine. The biomedical discourse assigns a central role to hormones and other physiological elements as impacting on young people's behaviour and identity during the 'natural' stage of adolescence. The biomedical discourse forms one of the 'origin stories' (Griffin 1993) of adolescence, which is traced back by commentators to the idealisation of certain images of the body, excluding deviations there from (Stevens et al. 2007). In relation to this 'hormonal' discourse of adolescence, Lesko (1996) suggested that it invited adults' control as a logical reaction to the assumed disruptive and destabilizing changes of puberty.

Project worker Aaron for example referred to 'testosterone' as part of his explanation of the difficult relationship between young people and their parents 'A lot of times when the teenagers come into about 15, 16, the testosterone kicks in....'. In the same vein, project worker Davina recollected an experiment reported in a TV documentary as evidence of the role played by elevated testosterone levels in increasing young men's risk taking.

They did an experiment with skaters and these teenage boys were skating. And they were trying all of these risks. They told the teenage boys that they were doing an assessment on skateboard tricks and they were measuring their testosterone levels and everything. And then they put a really hot scientist there to measure it. The young boys tried more risks. They tried more tricky stuff because their testosterone levels and they wanted to impress the girls more.

The biomedical route of explaining offending behaviour also opens up contradictions, such as why an intervention such as the GYDP is expected to make a difference if young people's



elevated hormonal levels cause their offending behaviour. Similarly, both the psychologising and biomedical narratives would also suggest that young people cannot or should not be held responsible for their actions, if crime was caused by their make-up and the chemical reactions going on in their bodies which are induced by a stimulus which is beyond their control.

### **Young people's peer influences**

The developmentalist aspect of the psychologising discourse of adolescence was another dominant theme identified throughout the interview data. The emphasis here was placed on the young person as an 'unfinished' individual. From this perspective, a young person's identity was understood as not fully formed and in a stage of transition towards her fully developed adult self. Lacking this 'firmness' of their personality, young people were seen as a consequence easily influenced by outside factors. This situation was often alluded to in explanations which attributed youth offending behaviour to 'peer' influence. Lesko (1996:157) suggested that the peer orientation of young people provided yet another 'confident characterisation' of young people, providing 'further evidence of their irresponsibility and untrustworthiness' and inviting 'adult control of youths' lives. More importantly she also highlighted how this construction of young people excluded alternative explanations of young people's peer interests: 'No attention is given to the socio-historical segmentation of teenagers into organisations with narrow age bands and the lessening of contact with adults or children as the contexts for turning towards age mates. Peer orientation has been naturalized as a universal, naturally occurring characteristic of teenagers' (Lesko, 1996:157). This was for example exemplified in project worker Una's statement:

I think for the majority of them could probably be peer group... I think peer group is a huge thing especially in Location X because there may be up to three or four hundred people in a group at the weekend. Yes. They'd gather right in Park X. The woods behind us used to be a big spot. See, Location X is that big area where they'd all come together.

Very frequently, the developmentalist discourse of adolescence was also drawn upon through conjuring images of the young person whose thinking was presented as 'limited' to the here and now. Offending behaviour was explained through the lack of rational ability or foresight to think about the consequences of such behaviour.

Max: But for the others I think it's just an element of adolescence and just not thinking beyond the here and now.

The naturalising discourse of adolescence was also extended through the concept of young people's 'natural' interest in 'risk-taking'. France (2000) has shown how 'youthful' risk taking has become understood on the basis of 'unquestioned assumptions' about 'adolescence', which essentialise this socio-cultural phenomenon to a range of developmentalist notions of adolescence based in biological determinism and psycho-medical literature. As such, the ideas underlying the 'risk-taking' discourse span across the dominant discourses discussed here. Project workers frequently referred to young people's interest in 'risk taking' as a 'natural' part of 'adolescence', as for example project worker Marian's statement showed:

And they're young and sure they want to be a bit of thrill and a kick, so they are going to get involved in something for the crack of it or for the hell of it, you know, so it kind of leads one to the other.

Project worker Davina also referred to this discourse of 'risk-taking' in the forms of smoking, taking drugs or having sex as 'essential' and 'normal' elements of being young and having a *good* teenage life. In her statement, 'risky behaviour' was presented as the norm in teenagers' lives.

Smoking drugs is cool for a teenager. Anyone who says otherwise I think didn't have a good teenage life. Teenage years is all about trying to have sex, trying to take drugs and trying to be cool. If you got other interests then brilliant, but I remember as a teenager...They're the main things that everyone else seems to be doing. They're the cool things.

More often than not, different variations of these individualising problematisations were found in combination in project workers' accounts. JLO Simone for example, combined aspects of immaturity, lack of forward thinking and peer-influence to explain offending behaviour:

I think as well maybe, you know, they don't think of the consequences, immaturity as well, you know. They think they know how, but you know, they haven't really thought

out of where they'd like to be in five years down the road, or ten years down the road, you know, but it's all 'this year I know'. I'm bored and I'm going to be drinking. Everyone else is doing it. They're always looking at what other people are doing.

JLO Peter's narrative drew on a friend's explanation borne out of her teaching experience. It was one which included key contradictions; offending behaviour as unchangeable on the one hand and a transient phase on the other.

There's a principal out the country and... and she's a great friend. She said some of them are just old fashioned bold and they could have, there would be conditions diagnosed there that I've never heard of, but just some of them just have this trait in them and its difficult to get rid of it. It's next to impossible. Now, some of them just grow up and grow out of it you know.

Referring to young people who offend in an old-fashioned way as simply 'bold', he expressed his scepticism of new medical diagnoses ascribed to what is commonly defined as 'bold' behaviour. At the same time he drew on the notion of a persistent or immutable psychological trait inherent in individuals as the explanation for their offending behaviour. Then, rather contradictorily, he suggested that young people would grow out of offending.

### **Positive side-effects and the exclusion of alternative discourses**

Finally, the analysis of interview data showed that the strong presence of 'origin stories' or 'confident characterisations' of young people and their offending behaviour also had to be interpreted with caution. A number of project workers sometimes did not accept these 'grand narratives' of youthful offending unquestioningly, but used it to construct more nuanced explanations and understandings of youthful offending. Project worker Fiona for example expressed awareness of the shortcomings of 'peer explanations' of youthful offending. She put greater emphasis on young people's own agency in their choice of friends and their engagement in criminal behaviour. As a consequence she proposed that 'peer influence' would be a more appropriate description than 'peer pressure'.

I think peer influence like, as much as you hate it, like I say peer influence rather than peer pressure, because I think like young people will gravitate

towards peers that are similar to themselves and maybe might be likely to engage in same kind of behaviour themselves. So I don't think it's like that. The young person isn't made, to do a certain thing, you know. But definitely there is a peer influence and within their groups that they will gravitate towards kinda certain behaviour and that can escalate as well.

Second, dominant discourses which individualised young people's behaviour possibly also have 'side-effects' which at the end might have positive outcomes. Project worker Aaron for example, described his involvement in counselling training based on William's Glasser reality therapy (Glasser, 1965/77). The premise of reality therapy is that individuals must accept that they can only fulfil their needs within the framework of their reality and choose their behaviours on these available choices. Within psychology, this approach has been critiqued for being 'confrontational [in practice], paying scant attention to the unconscious, to transference, or to alienation of the inner self' (Besley, 2002:97). The sociological critique of understanding young people and their offending behaviour detached from any socio-structural aspects applies as to most other psychological theories. However, Aaron's account showed that while he drew on this individualising discourse of young people's offending, the same logic opened up the possibility for him to advocate positively on behalf of young people with their parents. This was enabled by the logic that young people's behaviour was separate from, or only one manifestation of their 'true person', a premise adopted from behaviouralist models such as Glasser's:

Be he's [Glasser] of the kind of frame of mind that I suppose the behaviours that young people or any person presents with is a choice. So, they choose that behaviour. I can't control or I can't change a person's behaviour. They're the only one responsible for doing it... So, when I go and meet parents and I don't have kids, when I meet parents they're kind of telling me, 'He's not doing this, he's not doing that.' They get so caught up in all the things he's not doing. They focus only on the negative or with lot of guys, if they're caught in trouble with the guards the parents only see that young person as the offender. They don't see his behaviour separate to the person. So, I say to the parents what's nice about Johnny, what's nice with him at the moment. [The parents say] 'For God's sake he's gone off in doing this, and doing this, and doing this.' And I'd say, 'But you know what? He's actually quite humorous, he always makes me laugh.' or 'Do you know he's great in helping me out in the kitchen,' or 'He's great in

doing this.' So, I'd always ask them to continuously try to separate the behaviour from the person because they're treating the person...they're treating their child in the eyes of their offences, so it is always very negative.

The strong presence of 'origin stories' amongst project workers' and JLO's accounts of young people and their offending behaviour, also has to be understood against the exclusions of structural explanations of the same it enables. As Griffin argues:

Origin stories about 'delinquency' have set out to search for the cause(s) of a socially constructed phenomenon which is situated within the 'deviant' individual (who is usually working-class, Black and/or male), their 'deficient' cultural practices and/or family forms....Such origin stories seldom construct 'delinquency' as a product of poverty, racism or other structural forces (Griffin, 1993:106).

Further, I would suggest that the strong presence of 'confident characterisations' of young people and their offending behaviour complemented the political rationality which underlies the diversion projects: wider societal explanatory factors move to the background at the expense of individualising explanations. This knowledge base about young people's offending behaviour forms the basis for a practice informed by the new rationale, which is according to commentators the driving force of advanced liberal regimes of crime control (Garland, 2001; O'Malley, 1992; Rose, 2000). So on the one hand, the narratives identified above are age-old characterisations of young people and their offending behaviour, and at the same time, they also correspond with the new governance of youth crime (Gray, 2009). This is how they are powerful in their combination and offer an exemplary case of the power-knowledge nexus (Foucault, 1977). The strengthened effect of the combination of both discourses was that alternative explanations of youth crime, emphasising other than individual factors, as explanatory factors of youthful offending, are given less attention.

### **Social and Cultural Deficiencies: Young People and their Families**

The extension from work with young people to their families in the context of the GYDPs had been noted by several project workers as a feature particular to the projects, especially when compared with more mainstream youth work. In the following, I take a closer look at how the family becomes the medium through which the young person and their offending behaviour

becomes known. The specific ways in which this was frameworked enabled certain kinds of intervention to become possible. As project worker Jessica's and JLO Laura's quotes show, project workers and JLOs frequently referred to how a young person's family was often used as a 'proxy' to understand the young person's offending behaviour.

Jessica: I think that a lot of it [origins of participants' issues] could be family based issues, personally. You know, that's not them all like a lot of them would have no issues in the family home but you can see, from a lot of the younger ones would have like problems at home now.

JLO Laura: Well with the Irish Youth Justice Service coming on board that we do have the formal process and I would look at things more on that basis now and I suppose mainly family history will be a big thing as well.

The interview data further showed how the discourse of moral, social and cultural deficiencies of young people opened up the family as a justifiable 'inscription site' (Donzelot, 1980: 96). Project worker Fiona's use of markers, such as 'morality' and 'values' was typical of this discursive construction of young people's offending behaviour.

There are things around just not having had boundaries or not having that respect for like other people's property or other people and you know, I suppose, like, I think there is, I'd be like reluctant to say that they don't have, kinda the same levels of morality but their values and principles maybe...they are much more fluid.

Couched in terms of social and cultural deficiencies, the focus here shifted in almost all narratives from the young person to include the role of young people's families and their role in their children's offending behaviour. Parents were perceived as responsible for instilling their 'children' the right values and norms and were seen as having a powerful influence over children's behaviour from an early age. Project worker Claire's chosen example to illustrate her explanations of offending behaviour in relation to 'family values and attitudes' is worthwhile to consider in detail, as the same kind of rationale was frequently drawn upon by other project workers and JLOs:

And I suppose kind of again it goes back to kind of family values and attitudes... it's the same with stolen goods like, I mean, there's no problem or people actually buying stolen goods... I mean, if you're getting a bargain at your door, you're not going to ask where it came from and so it's that kind of thing you know... they [young people] don't really see a major problem with some of that petty crime you know, robbing an ice cream or a bag of crisps... they don't really see an issue with that and that's kind of a really engrained attitude, that comes from a very early age...

According to Claire's statement, it was the acceptance of petty crime made evident to children by their parents, knowingly buying stolen goods which led to children assuming that 'robbing an ice cream or a bag of crisps' was acceptable. While this and similar observations are maybe not 'wrong' as such - although it constructs children as passive recipients in the socialisation process - the point to make here is that these seemingly benign observations conceal and automatically foreclose other interpretations. Here, the discursive effects of dominant discourses become visible, as they are 'treated by the limits imposed on what can be thought or said within particular problem representations' (Bacchi, 2009: 69). Through favouring a 'cultural deficit' perspective on working class parenting, without appreciating the day to day grind involve in making ends meet, alternative explanations which might also inform working class parents' decisions, which are from the outside perceived as immoral choices and actions, are excluded.

Griffin (1993) traced the attribution of youthful offending to social and cultural aspects of young people's environments, including families and localities to the 1970s in the British context. She documented how 'deprivation' was equalised with working-class culture: behaviour was learnt in the family of origin and in other class-specific settings and passed down through the generations through the transmission of 'inadequate family forms and cultural practices'— both in academic as well as political circles. Very much resembling the exclusionary function of project worker Claire's account of the lack of a moral compass in working class families, Griffin also highlighted how this origin story sidelined or excluded structural explanations of 'delinquency' and rather focused on the 'individual' family (Griffin, 1993: 100). In the British youth justice context, Muncie (2004) traced the contemporary principle of 'parental responsibility' for children's offending behaviour and its application particularly to working-class families, to the origins of 'juvenile delinquency': 'The roots of

social disorder were tied directly to the family and the moral life of the poorer classes' (Muncie, 2004:58).

In fact, the analysis suggested that that while project workers did not overtly link the presence (or absence) of norms and values in relation to offending behaviour to social class, the combined result of descriptions of young people's families and areas converged around certain depictions of working-class communities. Table 8.1 depicts the themes that occurred regularly as parts of project workers' and JLOs' discursive constructions located in the socio-cultural discourse of youth crime. This explication of binary opposites revealed how these categories were based on certain 'values', which were idealised. These descriptions could again be read as strategies of 'liberal othering', similar to the application of risk factor profiles and the creation of categories of parental roles in young people's offending behaviour in GYDP policy (Young, 2011). Families were again described with certain attributes which 'distanced' and 'diminished' (Young, 2011:64) them from and in comparison to what was implicitly presented as the ideal or the norm.

**Table 8.1 Discursive constructions of project participants' families**

<i><b>Family descriptions in relation to offending behaviour</b></i>	<i><b>Binary opposite</b></i>
Acceptance/support of offending behaviour	Non-acceptance of offending behaviour
Single-mothers/absent fathers	Functional parental relationship
Alcohol/and or drug abuse	Normal alcohol consumption/No drug abuse
Lack of discipline, parental control and parental skills	Skilled parents and parents in control of young people
Low educational aspiration and attainment	High educational aspirations and attainment
Lack of hope or motivation to succeed	Motivated to succeed

In this context of these descriptions of young people's families and the increasing focus on interventions with families in the GYDPs (see Chapter 4 and 5), Donzelot's observation in relation to a key building block of the 'tutelary complex', which he conceptualised to trace the emergence and expansion of social professions since the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century France, provided a poignant observation in relation to the GYDPs and depictions of families of youth offenders. As Donzelot argued:



‘An infrastructure of prevention will then be erected around him [the child], and an educative machinery will be set in motion, a timely action capable of stopping him short of a criminal violation. Not only will he be an object of intervention, but by the same token, he will in turn become an object of knowledge. The family climate, the social context that causes a particular child to become a ‘risk’ will be thoroughly studied’ (Donzelot, 1980:97).

The analysis of interview data demonstrated how each of these descriptions in relation to family factors, was drawn upon by project workers. The point here was not to evaluate to what extent the statements related to young people’s families were right or wrong nor to underestimate the damaging impact of certain behaviours, but to deconstruct the discursive configurations which are used to construct young people’s families and their impacts on offending behaviour.

In relation to parents’ acceptance of young people’s offending behaviour, project workers and JLOs often drew on anecdotes which sought to demonstrate how offending behaviour was not seen as ‘wrong’ by parents. In his narrative of an incidence of offending (stealing clothes off washing lines), project worker Michael reproduced a fictive dialogue between the young person and his parents, as well as his responses to their motivations offered as explanations for the offending behaviour:

So, I am thinking that it is okay to steal stuff off a clothes line, right? Why would you do that? Why would you take that? Why would you take clothes off the line? ‘Oh, because she can afford it, she has got a good job and they have a lovely car.’ Take an Adidas top or steal an Adidas track suit, right? And, they might do this in 10 gardens, right? Yeah, so, I mean it becomes – you know why? ‘Because he can afford it. He has got a good job, right?’ And but if he’s got a good job, he must have gone to go to school or she must have gone to school, she went to university. They work hard for the money and is entitled do it. ‘Oh, but they are only snobs.’ But hang on a minute, right? But they think that’s acceptable. Not listening to the real reason as to how you came about to have that but it doesn’t seem to phase them and then they bring those materials home to the house and the parents say, ‘That’s okay.’ They didn’t say, ‘Where did you get that? Bring that back.’ And when you ask the question to the

young fellow, is it okay to do that? 'Oh, yeah, sure they have lots of money'. So, is it okay to steal out of the shop? 'Oh, yeah, sure they're millionaires.'

In his statement, Michael positioned himself as the pastoral worker, attempting to show the young person, that their justification of offending behaviour was not correct. Michael was also responding to a motivation of offending which is ascribed to 'typical' working class discourses in a wide variety of ethnographic literature and points to young offenders sense of their injustice and disenfranchisement in a class divided society (Mac Donald et. al, 2006; Mc Robbie, 1991; Willis, 1977). Ilan's (2007) ethnographic work on an inner-city Dublin GYDP has shown how young men's behaviour was motivated – in combination with local and biographical concerns- by broader structural issues, including marginalisation from wider society (Ilan, 2007:97). In his statement, Michael however did not consider class context and presented the offending victims as classless individuals. The distinction also drawn implicitly in his statement was between those who have 'achieved' and those who have not achieved (rather than between those who were given the opportunity to achieve and those who weren't).

Similarly, the topics of 'single motherhood' and the absence of a male role model were frequently used as markers of failing working class families found in media but also policy discourses and typically reflective of the 'moral underclass discourse' (Levitas, 1998). Both were regarded as a contributory factor to offending behaviour, particularly in risk-factor based paradigms of youthful offending. In contrast, recent research has shown how what is decisive in a young person's life is the quality of parents' relationship, not necessarily whether the traditional 'nuclear' family is intact (Layard and Dunn, 2009). Similarly, while it might be true that addiction problems, be it alcohol or drugs, do contribute to problems within families, the point that seems much more pertinent is that the families of young people participating in the GYDPs are made more visible and opened up to professional scrutiny in a way that other families with these problems are not. As Kelly (2007:43) observed, the focus of youth studies and other 'new class intellectuals' rendered '...visible the behaviours and dispositions of the *poor* and 'by omission, the rendering invisible of the behaviours and dispositions of those groups who are able to privatize their *dysfunctionality*'.

## Visiting the family home as disciplinary practice

Visiting young people's homes has always been a central element of JLOs work as part of the work under the Diversion Programme and as such can be understood as one of the key disciplinary technologies (Foucault 1979, 1984) deployed to engage with young people and their families in the context of diversion work.<sup>3</sup> However the interview data also showed that project workers were increasingly visiting young people's homes with the focus on assessing, supporting or surveilling parents and their parenting practices more generally. The interviews conducted with JLOs and project workers revealed how both elements of family support and surveillance were integral parts of the home visiting process.

JLO Peter's account for example showed how home visiting was an integral element of assessing a young person's circumstances. Even though the home visit was described as contributing to assessing a young person's needs for support, it was also constructed as an opportunity for assessing the level of 'dysfunctionality' (Kelly, 2007) which as a consequence of the child's offending behaviour could not be hidden any longer from the professional gaze of the JLO (or project worker for that matter):

Well I suppose in relation to the project, when I meet a young person, you have to weigh them... what their needs are, okay? And we'll say if a young person comes through for the first time for example for shoplifting and if they're, if you speak, first of all are the parents there, after that the two parents come in or what's the house like, we'd always try and call to house, the first time we meet a person because you get a great feel for what's going on. Especially when we get into the kitchen to see what's going on.

Similarly, project worker Anna's statement showed how the practice of project workers visiting families and building relationships with parents had become a central element of 'youth justice work':

If there's something that's not working within the family, we would try and make some type of contact. So, yeah, the family is a big thing but then ourselves, as youth justice workers, we would go a lot to the houses, and you know, do house visits. We do our one-on-ones then with the families. So, there's a lot of relationship building all the

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<sup>3</sup> For a good overview and discussion of the disciplinary practices involved in home visiting by social professions see Peckover, S.(2002)

time continuously happening. And I think you do need to have that. ...a child is not because he is him. It's because of all of the outside factors as well.

Project worker Claire's statement also showed how visiting homes has become routinised for project workers in the context of the GYDPs and how it informed judgements made in relation to the 'root' cause of offending. In line with the overall individualising explanations of offending behaviour, Claire tried to demonstrate that she was not blaming the parents, as they could themselves be victims of 'addiction'. Again, the parent was blamed for the lack of supervision, perceived to cause the young person offending, while at the same time was also constructed as a victim and an addict, incapable of good parenting.

We would be in and out of houses and you just know that there is very little adult supervision, there is very little you know, through kind of possibly not all the time the fault of the parent. It could be the parent could have an addiction.

As a disciplinary technology, home visiting was also exemplary of the panoptic process (Foucault, 1977), as young people and their families became subjects of surveillance and study in seemingly benign and subtle ways. The imaginations about domestic family space and young people's wider environments contributed to the overall imagery of young people in their communities. The paradox emerging here was that on the one hand, these spaces were opened up to different kinds of interventions and disciplinary technologies, on the other hand they were constructed as un-doing these efforts. The exposition of project participants' families' 'dysfunctionality' through their involvement in the projects became also tangible when considering for example JLO Laura's observation about 'social issues' in the area where she worked- a disadvantaged urban area.

But there will be a lot of social issues in an area like this. Parents with drug habits or whether they're on methadone or whatever, drink would be a big thing. A lot of houses I go into and you smell drink, that could have been just from the night before. I'm not casting any judgment but it is a big issue and poor parenting like that putting the kids down and aggressive parenting, you know, everything's a battle, everything's a shouting match. And a lot of, I don't know what you call them, single parents. Say the father is around but you never see him so the mom is doing majority of the work. Well a lot of the kids I think there is a frustration there because they don't know where dad

is or whether dad is there and dad just doesn't give a toss. They don't have the male role model or if they do have it, it's not a positive one. You know there would be families as well that the parents would have been in trouble with the guards...And they wouldn't be encouraging the kids. They'd encourage them to a point because they know the JLOs scheme, because they know they won't get charged so they're cute enough.

The quote was indicative of how the problems of families were 'othered' through combining parameters as outlined in the Table 2. First the 'social issues' were couched in individual terminology, and were thus equated with parents drug habits or drink, their poor parenting (aggressive in this instance), absent or negative role male models and parents who were 'in trouble with the guards'. JLO Laura's description of the 'family' situation was also peppered with what could be described as typical 'moral underclass discourse' (Levitas, 1998:2). Parents were described as irresponsible and feckless, as 'cute enough' to use the system, without being responsible for their children.

### **Parenting young people**

A frequently recurring theme in project workers' and JLOs' accounts in explaining young people's offending behaviour was specifically related to the discourse of 'parenting'. Parental responsibility for children's behaviour is not a new concept, both generally (Gillies, 2008) or in the area of youth justice (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Kilkelly 2005). However, the particular discourse of 'parenting' could be described as a cultural shift from an emphasis on parenting as an intuitive and emotional task, to a rational and skills-based task which can be learned and honed. As Gillies observed: 'Parenting is no longer accepted as merely an interpersonal bond characterized by love and care. Instead it has been reframed as a job requiring particular skills and expertise which must be taught by formally qualified professionals' (Gillies, 2008:96).

Project workers and JLOs frequently commented upon how 'wrong parenting' led to or supported offending behaviour. What was striking was that in the majority of the accounts, the 'skill' that was either directly referred to or implied as lacking was that of 'control' over children and young people. This corresponds with earlier discussed discourses of adolescence, which through their reductionist assumptions positioned young people as subjects to be contained, managed and controlled. The discourse of 'lack of control' also idealised a certain

type of parent-child relationship which was not characterised by a focus on relationship, mutuality and respect between parents and children, but as one where parents must be 'in control' of their children's behaviour. Through this construction, parents were also responsabilised for their children's behaviour and this automatically deflected from wider circumstances which might constrain parents' abilities to support their children. This wider societal discourse in the Irish context was also reflected in a most recent study on 'gangland' life in Limerick, where it was stated that parents who could supposedly be described as 'disadvantaged of the disadvantaged' often exhibited a 'marked lack of parental control', resulting in their children 'gravitating towards the street' (Hourigan, 2011: 67). The suggested solution to install Anti-social Behaviour Officers in local communities who repeatedly take children home if they come to their attention with the goal to break the 'addictive behaviour' of 'offending' or behaving 'anti-socially', is an indicator of the wider patriarchal attitude towards children.

In the context of parental orders, Goldson and Jamieson (2002) suggested the commonality between the New Right and the New Labour discourse on responsibility of (working class) parents and showed how New Labour has even shifted the discourse 'from notions of the failing' and 'inadequate' parent, to constructions of the 'wilful', collusive and even deliberately recalcitrant' (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002: 83). Indeed, in the context of contemporary GYDP policy, this was also an emerging category of description in relation to young people's parents and which was also repeatedly drawn upon by project workers and JLOs.<sup>4</sup>

Project worker Aaron for example provided an example of how parents actively contributed to their children's offending behaviour, by facilitating their under-age drinking in public and by 'only' remote-controlling their children's whereabouts and behaviours:

Like here it's quite funny that parents actually drop their kids off now to the areas where they'd go binge drinking. And a lot of the parenting is text parenting, 'Where were you? 'Are you coming home?' And it's not just low socio-economic families like different houses and the houses are palaces. And so it's the same thing. So, that would be it. But I thought it's huge.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, in the *Baseline Analysis*, five different types of parental responses to young people's offending behaviour are outlined. These categories were described as: parents lacking parenting effectiveness; parents concerned and possibly angry at the young person's offending behaviour; parents who minimise offending behaviour; parents who are indifferent; parents who are culpable in encouraging young people's offending behaviour (IYJS, 2009b: 30).

Particularly JLOs often highlighted how parents could do a better job in 'controlling' their children. JLO Rachel, listing what she considered to contribute to young people's offending behaviour, also referred to the parent child relationship being too loose and out of control. Her statement that 'the level of control that parents have over their children, pretty much dictates their behaviour' was very telling about how young people were viewed as individuals to be contained and controlled, in this case by parents.

Yeah, there obviously wouldn't be one, but one of the biggest issues I feel is to do with parental supervision and the level of control that the parents have on the children dictates pretty much their behaviour, so if you have a situation where there is a lack of parental control and then obviously you've got, you know, there is less accountability as far as the child is concerned and they go farther and farther astray in which a parental intervention is important

JLO Gavin's account was interesting insofar it indicated how the term 'parenting skills' has become an accepted term, which was used without precise reference to its actual meaning. He conflated the discourse of 'skills', i.e. something that can be developed and learnt, with that of an 'innate' capacity of 'caring' for children. In this way, parents, particularly mothers, were marked both as wilfully neglectful of their children, as well as naturally unable to parent.

Well, I suppose that they [the parents] don't have parenting skills... I think parenting is kind of an innate skill that you develop as a person. And I think some of these parents just don't have it. And if, if people don't have that maternal basic skills of caring for their children, the child suffers emotionally and all the welfare and all of that. Like you get parents, who just allow their kids to drink and take drugs, smoke hash. They see nothing wrong with it....I mean kids come in here with their parents and like 5 or 10 minutes into the interview, you kind of figure that the parents are the problem, you know, not the child. And if you had an hour talking to the parents and telling them how to parent their child, a lot of the problems would go away, you know.

In his statement, Gavin also cast himself in an expert role and in possession of the knowledge about parenting. The reference to 'maternal basic skills' also fitted into the broader discourse of working class parenting, where single mothers and absent fathers are typically responsibilised for their children's behaviour.

JLO Laura's account showed how the discourse of 'lack of control' and 'lack of parenting skills' was strengthened by drawing upon constructions of young people who were increasingly 'uncontrollable'. Interestingly, in her description of young people's refusal to accept parental control, JLO Laura used the word 'teenager' and implied that parents lacked the knowledge and skills in terms of how to deal with 'rebellious' young people:

And like that I have seen kids from great backgrounds from parents who are so motivated and so interested and they have gone down you know. I do think there's an issue with teenagers. I know my rights, you can't keep me in mummy. I can do what I want, I can go where I want. I think parents are at a loss with how to deal with that... I know my rights and you can't, you can't make me sit in my room and you know. I think that's changed rapidly. I think kids, I'm not saying that kids they shouldn't voice their opinions or whatever but I think parents just don't know how to deal with that kind of confrontation. I think you know it either ends up in a screaming match and the kid running out or just parents being dumbfounded and the kids running around and doing what they want.

The construction of children as powerful and parents as submissive in JLO Laura's account was also reflective of the typical discourse used by conservative voices in opposition to children's rights agenda. From this perspective, children's exercise of their agency is seen to challenge more traditional parenting styles. Resonating with JLO Laura's account was JLO Kieran's account- parents were represented as too lax and as spoiling their children, and as even 'afraid' to confront them. At the same time, the discourse of parenting skills ('working with children') was also drawn upon:

I think you're looking at parents big time, trying to see how well they're working with children... but I have a feeling at this stage that people are afraid to confront their children and that they give them everything. They'll be coming from work, both parents in the evening and next thing it's all goodies and making up for the day missing, you know.

JLO Kieran's description of some of contemporary Irish family life is arguably experienced by many parents and their children, who are obviously not involved in offending. In this way, Kieran's account closely resembled the 'latch key discourse' which is very common in



traditional explanations of youth crime, and again locates the responsibility with parents working outside the house and not being there for their children.

JLO Gavin's account revealed how he sought to responsabilise parents of offending children in his engagement with them.

To challenge the parents, I suppose, and to get them to realize that what they're doing...what they have done so far is not enough or is not good enough or is not dealing with the problem. And you know, it's like kind of trying to make sure the child does his homework. If you don't...if you don't make any effort whatsoever, if you don't sit with them and make them to do it, it's not going to get done, even the best kid in the world. So, these parents are allowing their kids out late at night. They're allowing them up and down the main street, you know. When something goes wrong, they support them rather than saying, you know. They send out all the wrong messages. That's where I and I suppose, how do you deal with that? You just have to sit down and listen, you know the kind of the idea of, you know, they need to know where their child is, who they're with, where they're going, when they'll be back and what they're doing. And if you don't know that, then the child gets arrested. What do you expect? So, to put the responsibility back on to the parents.

In the context of ethnographic work conducted by Ilan (2007), the example used by JLO Gavin of spending more time with children, supervising their work, was indicative of the lack of awareness of the background of most of the children attending the GYDPs. An assumption here was that parents had reasonable education themselves and hold the cultural capital gained as beneficiaries of the education system. It also neglected the fact, that middle class children had typically more to lose by not being supported in their homework, than working class children. At the same time, this responsabilising discourse automatically excluded alternative explanations which have clearly demonstrated how the material context and life chances informed by social class positioning influenced parenting resources and styles (Box, 1987; Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1994; Wilson 1987). Gillies (2005, 2006 and 2008) challenged the notion that parenting could be separated from its socio-economic context and showed how the experience of living class was integral to the day-to-day process of raising children. In the Irish context, Ilan (2007) showed in his study how 'parents often don't share or lack the capacity to maintain project workers' concerns and priorities' (Ilan, 2007:209). He gave the

example of an overstretched mother, who besides working and looking after smaller children, simply did not have time to deal with her teenager's 'offending' behaviour, let alone to support him with homework, etc. It is in this context again, where the discourse extended by project workers and JLOs appeared to be a particularly middle class. JLO Gavin saw his role as responsabilising the parents.

### **Parental attitudes towards education**

A related theme often drawn upon by project workers and JLOs in their explanations of youthful offending was in relation to families and their attitudes towards education. Project worker Claire in explaining young people's failure to succeed in the formal educational system (and as a consequence contributing to the risk of offending behaviour) referred to 'family culture' as an explanatory factor. Here the family home of project participants' was described as 'irregular' and slightly chaotic: deadlines were not met; there was a lack of commitment and basic structures are missing, echoing popular discourses about working class culture.

And again it's because of making a commitment to things, meeting deadlines, you know, basic kind of structures of, that would be maybe in your regular family home. The people are used to kind of making commitments, but if you're not kind of used to that sort of thing, I think you find it difficult.

Again, the frequent emphasis on the lack of importance given by parents to their children's education is one framed entirely in a middle class context, where parents were beneficiaries of the education system. Gillies (2005) however showed in her study on parenting styles in relation to schooling, how class had significant effects on these attributes. Working-class parents tended to be more concerned to teach children skills to deal with instability, injustice and hardship and equip them with survival skills, rather than with the acquisition of an academic skills base. Similarly, Gillies (2008:103) showed how working class parents due to their marginalised position often felt that defending their children when in trouble with school authorities (in relation to 'underachievement' or missing school etc.) was a vital parental function to fulfil, rather than encourage the child to adapt. The 'blaming' discourse of parents' 'complicity' in children's educational failure is therefore entirely neglectful of the socio-cultural context of working class parenting. By referring to how 'bad habits' (smoking, drinking, taking drugs, being involved in crime, school truancy) would be considered the 'norm' for the young

people she worked with, project worker Marian presented young people's entire cultural milieu as deviant.

It's very acceptable amongst a lot of families as well that their son or daughter isn't attending school on a regular basis, you know, there's excuses made for them, you know. And it's also acceptable like that they are smoking and maybe drinking ... they are known to be taking drugs or whatever. It's acceptable because you have a lot of...you have families that are involved in crime as well. So their parents would be involved. It's openly seen... it's the norm for them. Do you know what I mean? They see it on a daily basis, so it's just the norm.

### **Young people's communities as spaces of hopelessness**

Young people's communities were described as facing multiple problems, mirroring those already elaborated in descriptions of families: low educational achievement, drug and alcohol abuse and deviant values. In their overall reading, these portraits of young people's localities left an overall bleak and hopeless impression. Project worker Max for example highlighted how prolific offenders came from very particular areas with a longstanding history of offending behaviour.

And you can pick the areas in the town where there is a history of it. And there is a level of acceptance or a degree of it... of petty crime, of public order and alcohol related offences...Again, on looking at a greater detail there are a number of what would be considered prolific offenders and they would be young people from a particular area of the town. They would be particular neighbourhood norms and an acceptance of criminal activity that has family or siblings involved in criminal activity. And they are certainly the more challenging ones.

Max's comparison between prolific offenders and those who committed minor offences or only on a once-off basis was also interesting. In the latter case, young people's offending was explained in essentialist terms as merely part of growing up. In contrast the prolific offenders were steeped in crime in their family and community contexts and were thus more challenging to work with. Project worker's Michael statement also made the deterministic relationship

between young people's offending behaviour and their family background explicit and it also seemed to inform in a large part his response as project worker.

Like I said at the very beginning, if you're living in the community which I do and which I have been, you have an understanding where the grandfather came from, grandmother, what they did, what they didn't do. If I don't know that, I check with my own father, right? And it's black cat, black kitten, and it does happen like that because it's acceptable there's an ambivalence there. And by understanding the community, the people that live in the community, it affords you a greater understanding of where this young person is coming from and what type of work you can do with them. It's as simple as that. Some people, you know, some people you can tell them what to do. Other people, you have to coax them, and then other people you say, I'll come back. Look, I'll leave you. I'll be back next week.

In several instances, an ambiguity in the line of argumentation was used in describing the role of 'communities' in young people's offending behaviour. Project worker Niamh for example stated that it was attitudes of pessimism, pervading particular communities which influenced young people's offending behaviour. She followed from this that these attitudes in turn influenced communities' (and implicitly young people's) subjectivities in accepting that no other possibilities were an option. Young people's identities were presented as enmeshed with those of their communities and as mutually enforcing.

...it's like a learned behaviour that they don't know any better and like I said, it's well that the community that they live in. They kind of have this attitude that 'this is who we are'. 'This is the way we should be.' It's like they don't know any different.

In the statement above, Niamh acknowledged how the cycles of disadvantage have exclusionary effect on people's lives. This suggested that while she was aware of the impact of disadvantage on the community, she experienced more difficulty appreciating the impact of disadvantage on families and young people. The ambiguity was more explicit in JLOs Laura's account of offending behaviour in relation to the 'community'. JLO Laura described how she sought to encourage young people to 'make their way', but referred to the challenges that stigmatisation within a disadvantaged community presented. However, in another instance in

the interview she described the area's norm of 'underachievement' in a way which located the fault with the communities themselves.

I find here in this area, I know I could be corrected by other members and I'm not in uniform, I don't know. But when I go into the houses, they just don't like the guards. You know, there might be one or two that say he's sound or she's sound, but there's an attitude in the whole area that you just don't talk to the guards. You don't get on with the guards and there's also an attitude and I only had a conversation with a mother yesterday of if the kid is doing well, the other kids will drag him down. You know, they're slagged for continuing on in school, they're slagged for you know, playing sports and playing it well. They don't like to see somebody succeed and they drag them down ...That is difficult yeah and it's difficult for the kids too because I suppose when we're all teenage, we wanted to just be the same you know and yeah, I find that anyone who wants to progress or do well is kind of laughed at.

Again, JLO Laura's construction of educational marginalisation was predominantly cultural rather than structural and was rather presented in cultural terms. So it was not the lack of opportunity which she presented as the cause of offending, but the failure to grasp opportunities for fear of being different.

In using a comparable 'othering' strategy often used in the context of 'developing countries', project worker Theresa's commented about disadvantage, creating young people's communities in a very specific way as 'the other':

And its relative poverty to us, but a lot of our young people would live in the same circumstances, so they don't see it. At least that's their norm, you know what I mean. They are all from similar areas with similar homes and a lot of similar families. So they don't see that they are particularly disadvantaged.

Both project worker Theresa's statement as well as the general absence of socio-cultural contextualisation of young people's offending behaviours, including their families and localities, seemed striking given the abundant sources which show how continuous social and economic inequality contributes to certain individual behaviours, as well as collective conditions difficult to escape. In outlining his observations of late modern disadvantaged

neighbourhoods for example (the French cité and the American ghetto), Wacquant (1993: 374-375) has shown how perpetual disadvantage eventually turns into a self-fulfilling prophecy, which is difficult to escape:

To sum up, residents of the French cite and of the American ghetto each form an impossible community, perpetually divided against themselves, which cannot but refuse to acknowledge the collective nature of their predicament and who are therefore inclined to deploy strategies of distancing and 'exit' that tend to validate negative outside perceptions and feed a deadly self-fulfilling prophecy through which public taint and collective disgrace eventually produce that which they claim merely to record: namely, social atomism, community 'disorganisation' and cultural anomie.

In the Irish context (inner city Dublin) Ilan's ethnographic study furthermore showed how what was perceived as 'threatening' and 'offending behaviour' also served positive functions: he observed how young people's group membership (as members of 'the gang'), neutralised the marginalisation they experienced within their community and created a sense of belonging and stability that was not available through family or wider community (Ilan, 2007: 89). This aspect of lack of acknowledgement in people's communities was completely neglected in project workers' and JLOs' accounts in establishing the connection between young people's localities and their offending behaviour.

In this context then, the analysis of interview data also suggested that the GYDPs themselves were constructed with a particular spatiality: the GYDP became the location where the 'right' values were instilled and taught and young people's families and communities were constructed as those 'other' spaces where their efforts were possibly being undone again. Through this, young people's environment was again created as 'the other', as 'that environment, 'out there'. This perceived gulf between young people's 'cultural' environment as opposed to the project milieu also was made explicit in project worker Marian's statement. Young people couldn't be alienated too much from their cultural environment as this could make their life in the community more difficult:

So I suppose, we can try and do as much we can but, the support might not always be there at home as well. So it's like, you've to remember they are going back into the same environment again. So I mean, they need to be able to live in that environment

as well and without it being a challenge there, you know, or causing an extra or additional challenge but---Well, they are just a young person or a teenager or whatever, you know, and that's it.

Project worker Max also suggested that the work 'done' in the projects, was easily 'undone' in the socio-cultural spaces young persons' occupy in their day to day lives. Young people again were portrayed as relatively powerless recipients of outside influences, which were stronger than the influence which could be exerted by the project in their lives:

I think for us well there is a big challenge on doing a lot of really good work here with the young people, but they're going back home to the same environment. Its undoing to a degree the work that's been done here. Again, you see, one of the problems is that the issues in relation to the children might be, you know, the influence that they're getting from peers or the lack of supervision and the lack of control at home. So, even sending them to the projects, it might do okay, for the time they're in the project or might have some impact on them. If the predominant influence on them is, you know, brothers and sisters at home saying, you know, you shouldn't be going there, or the peers bringing them out drinking and doing whatever. If that influence is strong, then obviously the level of impact we can have, both as a JLO or as a project is limited, because our involvement with them is time limited whereas the parents and the home is unlimited...

### **Counter-discourses: young people's potential**

To offer a fair opportunity to project workers and JLOs to not only talk about young people's challenges - as their responses to questions related to offending behaviour - the designed interview guides also contained several questions (see Appendix 5/Questions 17, 20 and 22) which sought to open up the discussion of how professionals viewed young people more generally. Throughout the analysis of interview data attention was also paid to see how project workers and JLOs constructed young people's offending in the context of social constraints. A significant body of literature now exists which demonstrates how socio-economic background and/or social class remains a significant factor in young people's lives. This work also shows how these factors shapes opportunities as well as choices made by young people, including involvement in offending behaviour (see e.g. MacDonald et. al, 2005). An

analysis of both constructions of young people's potential as well as the contextualisation of their offending behaviour offered insights into the nature of alternative discourses drawn upon by project workers in relation to young people and their offending behaviour. The interview analysis showed that when asked about young people's 'potential', or to describe young people they work with in general terms, project workers and JLOs were passionately positive. This also corresponded broadly with how most of them explained their motivations to get involved in working with young people and to enhance their wellbeing. Project worker Jessica for example commented in the course of interview:

'They're great, like the young people are great. They have great personalities and stuff like that'.

What emerged however most strongly in project workers' and JLOs narratives' about young people's potential was its almost exclusive relation to education and employment. Only two interview participants emphasised more 'civic roles', in both cases limited to the setting of the GYDPs, for young people in terms of their potential. JLO Peter for example responded that: 'Absolutely I have no doubt there's good potential and some of them are junior leaders in the diversion project and that like you know?' Project worker Patrick, who had worked his way 'up' from volunteering in youth work in various positions, also suggested that: 'they [young people] could be future workers in these area, I could definitely see, I could definitely see in a couple of them, they have an interest, have an understanding, and being there themselves, I think it's what's key as well.' Interestingly, Elm-Larsen (2006:80) highlighted how this concept of the 'competent user' was central particularly in voluntary social work services offered to people 'at the margins'. They were not only evidence of how 'successful' an intervention had worked but the 'competent user' also replicates the very process they have experienced. The 'competent user' has been 'able to break free of their destructive habits...and has reached a level of self-control and empowerment needed to act out rational self-control' (Elm-Larsen, 2006:80).

Other than that, interview participants focused exclusively on young people's potential in educational and employment terms, indicating both a narrowly defined construction of young people's citizenship, as well as a focus on young people's futurity, particularly as future economic actors. This focus on citizenship defined through education and employment resonates with what Levitas (1998) has called the 'social integrationist discourse' in the British context of New Labour politics whereby social integration is pursued primarily through



inclusion in paid work. In the Irish context, Kiersay and Hayes (2010:6) have shown that even in Irish early childhood education children are constructed in terms of their futurity and as 'adults in waiting'. Early childhood education is aimed at socialising children into 'being ready for school in order to ultimately become a rounded active citizen and responsible adult' (Kiersay and Hayes, 2010: 6).

JLO James' statement for example highlighted how he saw education not only as an avenue for future employment, but also served to instil the right kind of values needed by working class young people in the world of work: perseverance, focus, and commitment.

I suppose, my hope, what I would say for a young person, if you're out of school or if you're missing school or whatever, try and get through the school system. Get a qualification, get your leaving cert, even if it's leaving cert applied, get that qualification. No matter what happens down the line, it's a qualification that cannot be taken off you. It's an achievement that even no matter what job you go for, at least an employer would be able to say, 'Look, at least this young person was able to focus themselves in getting at least this achievement.' Whereas I think there aren't so many jobs if you were out of school ... if they can't even give that level of commitment. It can be very, very hard for them to get work afterwards because I think an employer looks at it, you know, lack of focus, lack of I suppose perseverance, to be able to do that much, you know. So, you know, what are the chances that an employer would take, particularly in the current environment. That's my hope for any young person I deal with would be at the very least that they would stay in school.

Very frequently, project workers' saw it as the task of the project as well as that of other agencies to support the young person in reaching their 'educational potential' and often mentioned how the lack of support for young people and their failure within the educational system would let them down. Project worker Anna's statement was interesting insofar as she positioned the projects as a central node for coordinating services and supports for project participants.

They can be anything they want to be. Every child has the potential to be something but it's what's behind them that's holding them back and it has been instilled from an early age that would hold them back. And it's us... bringing the parents and all the

other organisations that are working within that child's life together and getting the right format, getting the right material together for them to make it work. There's a potential there for every single child. Okay, academically, they might not go to Trinity but that doesn't mean they can't be productive young people within the mainstream. Like I said, they can be anything they want to be.

Anna's statement also contained a level of ambivalence about what young people could really become in her construction of Irish society as meritocratic: '...they might not go to Trinity, but they could be anything they wanted to be.'

### **System failures, social class and social exclusion**

Interestingly, it was in the context of the discussion of young people's potential that an alternative discourse in terms of 'systems' failure emerged most strongly. Here, the emphasis shifted from the individual responsibility of the young person and their families to the wider challenges presented by the schooling system. The comments from Una, Nancy and Michael are presented to illustrate how they thought other systems, particularly the education system, failed young offenders:

Una: It is because I think a lot of them, if they had that extra ten minutes [in school] just of attention, it would eliminate everything. Yes, it would eliminate all of the troubles... I think the educational system just needs to change but that's a different issue altogether.

Nancy: ..and unfortunately I feel that a lot of services let them down and don't support them to reach their full potential sufficiently....schools particularly are quite poor here to be honest. Schools are not very motivating.

Michael: It's – that's a huge part of it and because of the fact, I've – which I am always ranting and raving about, but I blame the education system because the young people go to primary school, right? And, they don't identify the skills that they have. And if they do identify them, they don't hone them. Instead of putting the young fellow into- trying to put a square peg into a round hole. It doesn't work and this is

what's happening. So, these young fellows go out into the community, right? And it's rebel, rebel, rebel, right? And they get suspended...

In other instances, reference was made to 'other agencies' and how they let young people down. Project worker Oliver for example talked passionately about how young people were not supported appropriately by a variety of services:

We're working with young people that are hanging on the edge there, there is no, there is no next rung you know they're right there ... that's what happens to the other young people who I'm working with in particular. They fall through all the cracks. They couldn't cope with the education system, parents can't cope with them at home and then the training centres don't want them.. they could already have an active habit there. They're not 18 yet, so they can't get the Dole, so they're falling through all the cracks and it's like, whose job is it to pick them up and then that brings me up to social services and I swear to God, they're an absolute disaster, like they're just so much negligence there and I know they're work load is massive.....

Several additional narratives also offered a contextual understanding of young people's offending, relating particularly to the themes of lack of access to public space and services, a more general lack of 'power' of young people compared to adults and over-policing of certain groups of young people.

Project workers Matthew and Nancy for example described their project location as one which offered ample drinking opportunities on the one hand with very few facilities on the other.

Nancy: It is mostly down to drinking and the lack of facilities, there is no cinema in X. There is no bigger shops like they don't even have a Tesco. You know, there's no bowling, there's no cinema, there's no McDonald's. You know, simple things. There is a population of about 20 to 50, 000 I think. There's no – the amenities for young people, especially in the evenings. There is nothing like...There's nothing. The only thing that they do is go down to local fast food Restaurant...so they eat fast food but there's absolutely nothing for young people.

Project worker Matthew highlighted how under-age drinking, which he considered to be offending related, was being facilitated by retailers who were never held in any way culpable.

There are so many hangouts in X, you know, and they go drinking. But then, when a young person is caught with a drink on them or committing offense after been drinking, the off-licence never sold them the drink, the pub never sold them the drink.. you know the drink is falling out of the sky in X.

In a mixed socio-economic community, project worker Aaron stated that young people coming to the attention of the authorities were those who because of their working class style of dress and demeanour were perceived as not belonging, or as 'outsiders' in their own community. Young people were described as being surveilled in specific localities, because they appeared as the 'suspect population' (Carey, 2001) or out of place.

In general, they [community] don't like them. A lot of the ones that will be with us would be known around for having hood up, socks, their pants like...I think they'd regard them just as rough. Not a whole lot dangerous but I think that's just a perception that location X is affluent and to have them hanging or sitting outside supermarket chain A and B, just isn't fitting in, you could say, with their image of what Location X is and what they're doing. So yes, they'd just regard them as thugs and rough even though they'd be soft-spoken but I think it's the dress rather than anything else that would be an issue for them.

In another instance project worker Davina explicitly referred to how young people were sometimes 'dragged' into issues which were clearly out of their control:

We've got a bit of graffiti problem from time to time, sometimes there is trouble with rival families and the kids getting involved in that, and sometimes kids get blamed for that, that the problems are deep rooted. Sometimes when there are fights and arrests related to drugs, it's not the kids fault. They revolve in a world controlled by bigger people.

Project worker Michael also pointed out how young working class people's unequal position in society, made them part of the suspect population, unlike other groups who tended not to be

policed in the same ways. This also resonated with Carey's observations (2001) of police targeting more generally in the Irish context: 'the way targeting operates is such that general police suspicion attaches to certain groups in society.... It is simply the case that the criteria used by the police in exercising their discretion are most manifest in the concept of targeting, whereby those groups to which police suspicion attaches are targeted (Carey, 2001:9).

Yeah, let these people look at the white collar crime we have in this country. You know a guy gets brought to court for a TV license. You know, the guy walks away with 300 million....And then, these young people steal a bottle of Wicked out of the supermarket and [are] silly enough to get caught. You know, there is probably a woman in there, nobody is looking in there, because she is wearing a fur coat and a diamond ring.

Finally, the issue of 'social class' was very rarely explicitly addressed in project interviews. Project worker Oliver was one of the few who expressed his awareness of 'social class' in relation to opportunities he was afforded due to his own predominantly middleclass upbringing:

And I'm very, very well aware that everybody should have the opportunities that I've been given, you know, and they just don't, you know, but like, then my dad's side of the family are very middle class... my mom's would be working class and I can see the opportunity differences that they've had there ...

Project worker Niamh on the other hand demonstrated her awareness of the impact of 'social class' on working class young people's life chances generally. But when working with young people, she drew on her own success achieved by merit as if to convince young people to see that their social class positioning was not the only predictor of their destinies. Unfortunately her statement failed to recognise the education system's role in reproducing inequality along lines of social class.

And I live in x so it wouldn't be a nice area. Now like that again, there's good and bad in everything but, I always use myself as an example like when the lads heard that I went to college they were like, wow, you were into college and you're from Y and we didn't think people from Y went to college like so, I am constantly using myself as an

example that even though I'm not from an upper class area, I'm from like a very working class area that people can change and do good for themselves.

Again, project worker Michael raised the issue of how social class informed policing practice and how the 'suspect population' (Carey, 2001) was constructed through discriminatory policing practices. In this case, the image of 'scruffy' people was described as incongruent in a 'posh' location, immediately raising concerns. Here, project worker Michael clearly expressed his awareness of the 'structural' disadvantage some young people are exposed to.

I am fully aware of the Gardai spending quite a lot of time in the housing estates because these young lads hang around in groups of 10 to 15....Now, if you go out the other side of town, ....which has some lovely housing estates out there. There'll still be guys with hoodies and they're straight across from the graveyard and the church and they'll be drinking out of brown paper bags. The squad car will pass by. Okay. But, if some of our lads from the town centre that go to the same school as these guys are up there....decide to leave the town centre, move out and befriend them here and sit across from the church. If those guys are seen, the squad car will pull up straightaway. What are you doing here lads? Because of the lads, where they're from. And that's facts. And I don't like that.

However, in many other instances the interview data revealed little evidence that for JLOS and project workers, poverty and disadvantage have considerable explanatory power when understanding young people's offending behaviour. When JLO Martin was asked for example if he thought that youth crime might be related to disadvantage, he responded:

A small bit. Yeah. But some people, some houses you go into to now it's evident to say that there wouldn't be money there like, you know. So, I suppose things like shoplifting, getting money to buy clothes would be, could be an option, like, but majority would be that to feed a habit...You know, the majority say of breaking into houses was to get handy cash to feed heroin problems, breaking into cars, to rob radios to sell them on to make money, quick cash. It was all about quick cash, really, you know.

By linking the issue of poverty with addiction, Martin's statement also lost the explanatory power of poverty: individuals are seen as responsible for their addictions. When JLO James was asked whether he thought that young people's offending was possibly poverty related, he responded as follows:

It can be (poverty related) yeah. It can be. Yeah, typically, the social background or whatever. It can be but a lot of the time, it's just neglect, do you know what I mean? There's poverty, and there's parents inside the pub 7 nights a week, you know what I mean?

Thus, while JLO James acknowledged the impact of a structural problem like poverty, it was qualified by an individualised explanation- what persons are doing to create or exacerbate their poverty and to neglect their children.

### **Working with young people and their families: ethical reconstruction**

Despite the occasional references to socio-economic/cultural constraints experienced by young people the interview data showed that the construction of young people's offending as mainly an internal and individual problem informs certain ways of working with young people and with their families. This was what Rose called the ethical reconstruction of excluded citizens to be reattached to a virtuous community':

Exclusion has become a fundamentally subjective condition. It is not a psychological subjectivity with social determinants, as in welfare regimes. It is an ethical subjectivity and a cultural subjectivity. The problems of the excluded, of the underclass are to be resolved by a kind of moral rearmament. ....It is through moral reformation, through ethical reconstruction, that the excluded citizen is to be reattached to a virtuous community (Rose, 1999: 335).

Here, the recurring themes were related to building up young people's self-confidence, increasing their ability to 'feel' empathy with the victim, increasing their reflective ability to reassess their personality, goals and behaviours to take increased responsibility for their actions. This focus on the 'inner life' of the young person also emerged in the context of repeated observations that young people were experiencing discouragement in their lives,

particularly from their parents and in school settings: ‘...and the problem is that they're used to being told no and that they're bad and they'll never get anywhere’ (Project worker Matthew).

However, in evident contrast to the recognition of systemic failures and wider structural barriers, project workers very frequently concluded that it was ultimately young people’s own responsibility to take up the opportunities presented. The emphasis here shifted again on the young person as an ‘independent’ and active agent who had to take responsibility for their actions and make the right choices.

Una: Their potential is up to themselves, how much they want things. I can only want it so much and especially with the schooling...

Project worker Claire, equally talked about outside supports and young people had to ‘actively arise to supports’. She very clearly showed how it was young people’s failure to make commitments or to conduct themselves in particular ways which contributed to their ‘failure’ in achieving success.

I think they could become anything they want to be if they had arisen to supports and the right things in place for them... but I think a lot of these young people have a huge potential but unfortunately I don’t think it’s always achieved at all. I think they under achieve all the time and fall out of the system too early and we’ve had a few that have gone to college but haven’t maybe passed the first year and again it’s because of making a commitment to things, meeting deadlines, you know, basic kind of structures of, that would be maybe in your regular family home. The people are used to kind of making commitments, but if you’re not kind of used to that sort of thing, I think you find it difficult.

The combination of the concepts of support and individual responsibility was also very clear in project worker Ciara’s statement. Young people had to engage regularly, they had to ‘turn themselves’ around. They were the ones who made decisions. Similar to project worker Una, this was her strategy of dealing with young people who did not accept the ‘helping hand’:



Like we have seen young people who have actually who have turned themselves around, you know what I mean. Again, where proper support has been put in place, and whereby they engage regularly. I suppose you can see with other young people it's out of control, you know what I mean. And unfortunately, they are going down the road and once they reach 18, you know they are gone from the project here and it's just unfortunate. You can only achieve what you can achieve during that time. At the end of the day, their potential they reach that themselves, and they make the decisions to get them there themselves with our support and guidance. Some of them make the right decisions and unfortunately others don't, you know. And it's unfortunate because you're going to have to detach yourself from that like as well.

The young person was in all of these accounts charged with the responsibility to 'achieve their potential' and to 'take responsibility'. In many instances, these rationalisations can probably be explained by project workers' attempts to deal with situations when the support they offered did not achieve the expected results. However, I would suggest that the fact that young people's potential was exclusively connected to schooling and employment also corresponded with Kelly's observations that entrepreneurial selfhood is imagined in very particular ways in contemporary times. He argued that '... 'initiative', 'enterprise', 'responsibility' and 'activity' are narrowly imagined in relation to the performance of exchange relations in the extended order of capitalist markets- of all sorts' (Kelly 2006:28). The dominant discourse here was that with outside supports, young people had to take up these opportunities, turn their lives around and take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Also, young people's citizenship was constructed in a narrow way: via education and employment. This is a particular paradox, given that young people are those most affected by the current crisis and particularly those participating in the GYDPs.

Finally, the focus on young people's 'inner lives' in terms of explaining their offending behaviour (this also corresponds with current discourse around 'resilience'), also resulted in a particular focus on working with young people in the context of the GYDPs. The emphasis here was often put on young people's abilities to look at *themselves*, to see what's going on *for them*. Young people had to be active agents in their 'ethical reconstruction' (Rose, 2000:321). In this process, they are obligated to reflect on their behaviours, their influences, their cultural norms and their peer friendships. Implicit in this was, that the young person didn't have sufficient insights into what was 'driving him' towards offending behaviour but with support,

the young person would develop the insights required to enable him to change his behaviour. Their 'reconstruction' could involve learning to see themselves in a positive way, what one project worker referred to as young people, 'seeing themselves in a different light'. Such insights were considered beneficial for enhancing young people's esteem and reminiscent of the deployment of technologies of the 'confessional' (Foucault, 1978). The ubiquity of confessional technologies across all social relations, makes it little surprising that it emerged also in the context of GYDP work. Foucault observed that society has become overly concerned with 'the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage' (Foucault, 1987:59).

Project worker Max's description of how this process worked, highlighted how it was encouraging young people to come to this self-realisation themselves, through their own self-examination of their thoughts, feelings, actions and relationships.

Our approach is very much about looking at where the young people are at. Looking very clearly at the incidence that they've been involved in and looking at the cohort of factors that are around the events and helping that young person to reflect themselves on the behaviours, on the influences, on the cultural norms and the peer friendship. And being able to support them in critiquing what's going on for them, because it's very easy to point this way, or that one, and the other one. That won't work. So it's very important about supporting them about learning about themselves. Just seeing themselves in a different light, hearing things in a different way. And so in terms of the direct work that would be very much it.

Similarly, project worker Nancy outlined how the 'main way' of working with young people was to increase their self-confidence and to get them to 'reflect' on their behaviours. In Nancy's statement, this perspective is combined with the discourse of case management and surveillance ('keeping an eye on them'), identified in Chapter 6, as a mode of intervention in the case of the GYDPs.

Often, once a young person's self-confidence is being built, and you know challenging their behaviour and not in a giving out way, but getting them to reflect on their behaviour and what are the results of things, it's just about case management that

way to see how they're getting along? Are they learning and keeping an eye on them. That would be the main way.

Several commentators have suggested in the youth justice context that strategies deployed to 'promote subjectivity in children' (Rose, 1990:156) through increasing their self-confidence and through focusing on approaches like counselling and cognitive learning programmes emphasised individual responsibility and gave little recognition to the impact of social context (Armstrong, 2004; France and Homel, 2006; Gray 2007, 2009, 2011). Pitts (2001) argued that cognitive skills training was based on the underlying rationale of eighteenth century criminological classicism, assuming the 'rational' nature of the individual and ignoring a vast amount of literature that has shown offending to be contextualized within specific economic, social or cultural circumstances.

Indeed, project workers often suggested that work which could be described as 'ethical reconstruction' would have to happen in tandem with outside support provided to the young person as well. However, I suggest that despite these assertions, the individual young person was ultimately perceived as responsible for effecting change in their lives. Project worker Jessica for example, while showing that young people needed the support of workers, schools and family, in the final verdict referred to young people's 'confidence' level as the 'tipping point'.

I think like the potential is as far as they wanted to go, you know, and with the help and support of workers and like teachers and school and family like they should reach that full potential. I don't think there's any limit on their potential... once the kind of reach their confidence level in themselves, you know. I don't think there's any limit on their potential.

Related to this were the frequent references for young people to take responsibility for their actions. Throughout his interview, project worker Aaron was torn between pointing out how the project was supporting young people and that it was sometimes the 'lack of attention by other people' that resulted in 'this young person failing'. However, she repeatedly reasserted – with references to the developmentalist notion of childhood (increasing capacities), the individual responsibility of young people, particularly when they reached the age of majority/defined adulthood.

When they turn the ages of 18, 19 or 17, 18, 19, they need to have a cop on themselves. They can't be blaming other people for their downfalls if they're responsible for it... But they have to learn... depending on their age, they have to learn that they have to do things themselves... they have to take responsibility.

Similarly project worker Davina, who drew quite centrally upon on a youth work identity throughout the interview, combined the concept of 'self-belief' with the need for young people to 'take responsibility':

Just give young people a bit of self belief and a bit of encouragement and to create a better environment for themselves because they are responsible for their environment, they are responsible.

### **Social change as individual empowerment**

Several project workers when asked directly how they thought they could contribute to changing wider circumstances that confront the young people they work with, adopted a pragmatic perspective. Drawing upon this perspective, they outlined that they were creating *opportunities* for young people, but that it was not possible for the project to go further than this. Interestingly, Gillies (2005) has suggested that 'generating opportunities', rather than social change was the underlying political rationale of the New Labour Government in the UK: 'This concern to 'empower' individuals by ensuring they take responsibility for their decisions has driven the welfare agenda which focuses on generating opportunities as opposed to direct financial or material aid' (Gillies, 2005:837). This is also a typical meritocratic society discourse, where individuals are seen as individualised citizens constructed in terms of 'responsible' risk taking (Giddens, 1998). The implied claim made here is not that GYDPs would indeed have the capacity or responsibility to change structural constraints which young people face, (see Williamson 2005). However, they could make critical contributions to public discourse on poverty and inequality in terms of how it impacts on young people they engage with in ways which seek to enhance their rights and status in their communities. They could also critically advocate on their behalf when other local services discriminate against them. However, it appeared from this research that a large focus of the projects was to convince young people that their poor living conditions and life chances was not entirely deterministic and that they could better their lives but only if they tried hard enough. In wider terms, this could also be

interpreted as a combination of what Levitas (1998) has termed the 'moral underclass discourse' and the 'social integrationist discourse'. The former amongst other things, 'focuses on the behaviour of the poor rather than the structure of the whole society' and 'ignores inequalities among the rest of society' (Levitas, 1998:21), while the latter limits the conceptualisation of social exclusion to paid work and as an extension also to education leading to paid employment.

Project worker Matthew's choice of words in the following statement was also interesting, as they ascribed passive status to the 'two young girls', as the project was credited for them going to college.

It's limitless. Like I suppose once they come along to journey with us and they realize that they...that everything that's out there is open to them as well and it's up to them and the problem is that they're used to being told no and that they're bad and they'll never get anywhere and it takes us a while to get them out of that head space and go, 'No, you can.' I suppose what we have done here, we have opened doors as well, like sending those two girls to college. And I suppose that's and I suppose that's the one thing that we want to try to achieve as well as realize that they can choose their way.

Finally, project worker Oliver reflected critically on the emphasis of 'empowering' young people through skills, etc. Throughout the interview, Oliver repeatedly reasserted that he had a 'radical' sense of what he thought was expected of youth work generally and of himself as a project worker. However, as in the statement below, he then acknowledged very quickly the functionalist nature of the project work in the framework of the GYDPs, which was about bolstering the system as it is.

I mean, I suppose they are into employment opportunities... definitely and I suppose in a way and as much as I would...we're supposed to be changing the system and us helping young people to fit into the system, but really that is what we're doing a lot of the time, you know, so giving them the skills to be able to maybe not lose their cool in situations to be able to cope within a, like an interview situation or like to understand the function of authority or like, I suppose how the school system works and how they can make use of the system better...

Oliver's reflective statement also showed once again, how projects functioned to do 'the disciplinary work' necessary to mould young people to fit into the system, which was unfortunately never expected to change. Broom's (2008) observation made in her analysis of hazards of health prevention seemed pertinent here: 'because it is often asserted that health service providers cannot intervene in such elements as the economy, urban design, or cultural and socioeconomic inequality- the default option of the individual as author of their own destiny is constantly reinstated' (Broom, 2008:13). This assertion was also drawn upon in the context of the official project discourse: more fundamental social change had to happen on *another* level and this was conceptualised in such a way that was beyond the power of individual projects or the work done with young people.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter sought to explore how project workers and JLOs construct young people and their offending behaviour through a close analysis of their discursive statements. Given the context of youth crime prevention, the focus on problematisations of young people and their offending behaviour was not surprising, yet these took on particular forms. First, interview participants repeatedly drew upon different variations of individual problematisations of young people, which were recognisable as longstanding 'confident characterisations' (Lesko, 1996) of young people- promoted both in popular as well as academic discourse- including different combinations of psychological, developmental and bio-medical explanations of behaviour. However, these 'confident characterisations' were not always adapted uncritically, but refined and sometimes also deployed to draw attention to young people's feelings of discouragement or disappointment in different settings. Nevertheless, the commonality shared between all these confident characterisations resulted in the highlighting of individual responsibility of young people and the simultaneous exclusion of broader social, economic and cultural constraints and opportunities as factors relevant to young people's offending behaviour. This corresponds with the new governance of youth crime (Gray, 2009) and it is this combination of 'old' and 'new' knowledge which results in a particularly forceful and seemingly uncontested view of young people and their offending behaviour.

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<sup>5</sup> In this relation see for example the statement made in the *Baseline Analysis*: 'Garda Youth Diversion Projects cannot respond to all these needs [that project participants are faced with] and have to make judicious choices about the best use of limited resources to make their most effective impact on crime reduction' (IYJS, 2009b: 35).

This individualising discourse was also extended to young people's families, which have emerged more definitively as a site of intervention in the context of the GYDPs. Here, the emphasis was placed largely on the description of different socio-cultural deficiencies which had the effect of 'othering' young people's families with certain attributes which 'distanced' and 'diminished' (Young, 2011:64) them from and in comparison to what is implicitly presented as the ideal or the norm. This for example became particularly apparent in the frequently repeated observation that young people's everyday social and family environment would make it difficult to achieve changed behaviour. Here, the GYDPs were constructed as the transmitters of the 'right' norms and values, which were easily undone by young people's families, who appeared as 'different' and to a certain extent 'alien'. In their combination, the descriptions of young peoples' families were measured implicitly against middle class ideals on a variety of issues, including education, parenting and family life more generally.

The analysis presented in this chapter also sought to explore how young people were represented in a positive light and how attention was paid to alternative explanations of youthful offending, and correspondingly also a different imagination around interventions with young people. What emerged very strongly here, was how the discourse of the 'entrepreneurial' self (Kelly, 2006) and the conceptualisation of young people in rather narrow terms as productive individuals in the realm of education and employment, permeated project workers' and JLOs' discursive accounts. While several narratives also offered a contextual understanding of young people's offending, these were in the most cases ultimately brought back to shortcomings and flaws of individuals. Strongly reflective of official GYDP discourse, socio-cultural explanations of youthful offending were rather minimal in interview participants' accounts. Finally, this chapter has shown how these particular constructions of young people, their families, and their offending behaviour support interventions geared at altering individual subjectivities, more than anything else. The emphasis of the work with young people was to 'empower' them, to make them 'realise' what they were doing wrong, to understand that there were opportunities out there that they had to grasp. While strategies are undoubtedly based on the sincere hope of project workers' and JLOs' hopes to improve young people's lives, they are strongly reflective of how the individualising discourse of youth offending and corresponding interventions based on this same rationale (e.g. risk focused prevention paradigm) have achieved unquestioned truth status.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion and Discussion

#### Introduction

I conceptualised this thesis at a time when the Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) had just come under the leadership of the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) and were undergoing significant changes through the introduction of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). The observation of the seemingly unstoppable and officially unquestioned unfolding of this process of change brought into sharp relief some of the issues which I sought to explore in this thesis. As outlined in the introductory chapter this study aimed to analyse and deconstruct the dominant discourses constituting contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy within which the GYDPs are located. By doing this, I wanted to interrogate what had seemingly become unquestioned components of official youth crime prevention and GYDP policy and rather focus on explicating their underlying logics and rationalities. To achieve this, I located this thesis in a post-structuralist theoretical framework which enabled me to focus on answering the following key research questions:

1. What are the dominant discourse strands defining the interdiscursive field of contemporary official youth crime prevention policy broadly as well as official GYDP policy more specifically?
2. How are these dominant discursive constructions mobilised by project workers and JLOs and to what extent are they derived from official youth crime prevention and other discourses?
3. What are the underlying assumptions of these dominant discourses deployed in official youth crime prevention policy and by project workers and JLOs, particularly in relation to young people, their offending behaviour and interventions?
4. What are the effects – discursive, subjectification and lived- (Bacchi, 2009) produced by dominant discourses in official youth crime prevention discourses and those deployed by project workers and JLOs?
5. What is left out in dominant discursive constructions and what are alternative possibilities arising from these constellations in terms of thinking about youth crime prevention, young people and offending behaviour?



Each of these questions has been answered throughout the preceding chapters in the thesis in an integrated manner. In this concluding chapter, I seek to pinpoint the contributions of this PhD at several levels. First, I discuss the empirical evidence collected in this study, paying particular attention to how the research contributed to achieving the overall research aim and responded to the formulated research questions. I then continue to outline the original contribution this thesis had made to the theoretical analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy. Focusing on the methodological contribution of this thesis, I further demonstrate how the adoption of a post-structuralist theoretical framework contributed to posing questions as well adopting perspectives not yet explored in the Irish context. Finally, I conclude with some remarks as to how my research findings could be further developed through future research and how they could be applied to re-think Irish youth crime prevention and policy, specifically with regards to the GYDPs.

### **Garda Youth Diversion Projects: the evolution of an intervention**

To contextualise the discursive analysis of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP policy, I have sought to trace in detail the development of the GYDPs set in the wider landscape of Irish youth crime prevention policy. Through the close analysis of the policy and project archives, I have identified three distinct time periods in relation to the growth and development of the GYDPs which have seen their numbers rise from two projects in specifically urban-disadvantaged settings in 1991 to 100 projects in a variety of project locales in 2011. My analysis has shown how the projects' development and growth happened in a largely unplanned and piecemeal way, lacking any coherent strategy, particularly as to the role of youth work organisations, their staff and work practices in the evolving intervention of GYDPs. This has arguably created a wide space where the terrain upon which youth work organisations entered the field of youth crime prevention remains contested and unclear as to the contribution of youth work in the governance of young people's lives and local youth crime control.

Nevertheless, I have pointed out certain trends observable in the development of the GYDPs. I have shown how projects have slowly but surely moved from separate and largely disjointed projects with relatively large leeway in terms of project administration, governance and project work with young people towards an increasingly mainstreamed intervention starting with the taking over of the Irish Youth Justice Service in 2005. I have shown how the steady

rise of projects was reflective of the increasing focus accorded to youth crime prevention since the early 1990s, the enshrining of several preventative aspects in the Children Act 2001 and the ensuing formulation of Irish youth justice policy. In line with the governmentality approach to social policy analysis, I have particularly focused on tracing the rationalities underlying the development of the GYDPs. Through the genealogical analysis of the development of the GYDPs, I have shown how they evolved in a piecemeal manner and how they have gradually taken on a pivotal position in contemporary Irish youth justice policy and service provision. For example, I have shown through a genealogical discourse analysis of evolving project definitions how traces of broader understandings of projects' contributions to improving young people's lives and their communities have over time disappeared in favour of highly individualising constructions of young people's offending behaviour. These subtle changes in official project definitions further had significant consequences for favouring particularly individualising interventions with young people and moving the projects' emphasis from youth work to more narrowly defined 'youth justice work'.

The involvement of youth work organisations in the GYDPs from the very beginning of the intervention had been built on what was seen as the unique contribution which youth work could make through establishing meaningful relationships with young people and ultimately motivating them to consider behavioural changes. This logic however has gradually been altered towards more targeted, interventionist and individualising ways of working with young people, combining different elements of youth work, practices of social work and technologies rooted in behaviourist psychology. Ilan (2007) aptly concluded that GYDP provision and its increased focus on altering young people's individual subjectivities enables the state to avoid making decisions which would address the social and economic factors associated with young people's offending behaviour. My analysis provided a further layer of depth to this observation by highlighting how the privileging of individualising routes to address youthful offending obscured the broader structural issues and form the core rationale of the wider corporatist agenda and the advanced liberal logic, emphasising individual responsibility and initiative, underlying Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP policy. The analysis has further shown how projects have been gradually repositioned from more generic youth work type of projects focusing rather informally on diversion of different groups of young people from offending behaviour towards becoming a specific intervention aimed at supporting formal diversion work undertaken by the Gardai through the Garda Diversion Programme. This gradual shift means that at least on paper the lines between criminal justice agencies such as

the Gardai and youth work organisations have become increasingly ‘blurred’ (Cohen, 1985:257) which has significant implications for the field of voluntary youth work and young people engaged therein. Beyond policy discourse, this was clearly exemplified by some project workers’ and JLOs accounts which showed how projects clearly combined punitive and welfarist roles without contesting these.

### **The discursive construction of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP policy**

In line with post-structuralist approaches to social policy analysis, I have sought to analyse what dominant discourses have gained dominance and how they have become definitive markers of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy generally and GYDP policy more specifically. To establish the ‘positivities’<sup>1</sup> (Foucault, 1972:214) of these discourses, I have focused on two separate yet intrinsically connected analytical components: the identification of the ‘high politics’ (Freeman, 1999) or ‘rationalities’ (Miller and Rose, 2007) of government promoted through official policy discourses and its subsequent translation into the ‘low politics’ (Freeman, 1999) or ‘technologies’ (Miller and Rose, 2007) of government.

Bowden (2006) suggested that the GYDPs were initially set up to respond to local challenges perceived and dealt with under the umbrella of a breakdown of public order (Bowden, 2006). The analysis here shows however, how the GYDPs have to be understood as an assemblage of diverse rationalities and technologies, which bear the hallmarks of corporatist youth justice and the ‘new governance of youth crime’ (Gray, 2009:443) based on ‘advanced liberal rationalities’ (Miller and Rose, 2007) which have not yet been broached in the Irish literature. Three discursive themes which emerged particularly strongly here were the centralisation of leadership, the responsibilisation of partners through ‘governing at a distance’ and the deployment of actuarialist discourses. The analysis of the deployment of these discursive rationalities and technologies documented and traced in detail how the government achieved the systematic mainstreaming of a diverse youth work sector and other independent community groups. This took place not only in line with its advanced liberal politics of youth crime prevention and control, but also in the wider context of a co-produced youth work sector (Powell et. al 2012) and the contestable yet dominant social partnership paradigm of

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to Foucault’s term ‘positivity of knowledge’ (Foucault, 1972:214). According to Foucault, genealogical discourse analysis contributes amongst other things to establish ‘positivity of knowledge’, by teasing out the sometimes maybe implicit and not always immediately obvious ‘truths’ or assumptions of discourses.

Irish social policy (Murphy, 2002). Here the analysis also showed how the apparent 'paradox' entailed in the corporatist policy landscape of advanced liberal crime control, with centralisation of leadership on the one hand and devolution of responsibilities on the other hand, was normatively justified and operationalised in practice.

For example, the analysis has shown how official youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy systematically drew upon discourses of centralisation of leadership as the solution to challenges in the broader youth justice system and deployed various technologies of governance to enshrine the centralisation of leadership and concurrent 'governing at a distance'. The permanent repetition of how better leadership and coordination would ensure better outcomes across the youth justice system was exemplary of how contentious issues, such as the unequal power relations in partnership arrangements (Meade and O'Donovan, 2002) get sidelined. Gray (2009) for example has suggested that the assumption that better coordination and management would lead to better outcomes for young people is a common feature of contemporary youth justice systems and it deflects from society's broader responsibility towards young people. Here, the analysis has shown how official policy discourse was indeed successful in achieving a 'deferral of understanding' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 323) of the 'youth crime problem' in contemporary youth justice systems. The problem of dealing with youth crime was presented as a systemic problem emerging as the result of the collaboration (or lack thereof) of different agencies and services dealing with young people, but not as one caused by wider structural factors related to exclusion and social inequality. Discursively, strategies such as invoking common goals and thanking partners for 'buying into' centrally decided and managed processes were deployed to achieve the centralisation of leadership desired by the Irish Youth Justice Service. The analysis has shown moreover, how specific tools such as the design of audited work plans, consultation processes, circulated newsletters and organised conferences and events, have been designed to institute centralised leadership. This was further accentuated in the specific context of GYDP governance. The conduct of the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) and the subsequent implementation of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) as well as the introduction of new reporting and auditing tools were instrumental to achieve centralised leadership. The analysis has also shown how concurrently the 'responsibilisation' of partners was a central discursive theme of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention and GYDP policy. Amongst other non-judicial agencies, youth work organisations were systematically 'membershopped' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 38) into the new youth crime prevention agenda. Technologies deployed to institutionalise the responsibilisation of

partners specifically were the introduction of training modules and the involvement of projects as 'partners' in piloting the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61).

The very structure of the GYDPs (i.e. their spread across different locations, the involvement of different parent youth work organisations and the wide variety of project workers involved in the projects) offered an ideal site for the unfolding of a corporatist style of policy making and the deployment of advanced liberal technologies of government. Leadership was centralised and responsibility diffused at the same time, but with a permeating advanced liberal logic instituted through various technologies which established 'governing at a distance'. Projects and project workers were activated as participants in and shapers of this process by addressing their self-governing capacities and keeping a close check on how and if these were being fulfilled. I suggest that these advanced liberal rationalities have unfolded in a circular way: different facets of the corporatist youth justice agenda and advanced liberal rationalities have reinforced the very viability of project provision and have provided it with its contemporary contours. Concurrently, the projects have offered through their wide geographical spread and their diverse profiles (Bowden and Higgins 2000; Bowden 2006) the ideal canvass onto which a corporatist model of youth justice policy could be projected and indeed further promoted with relatively little contestation.

Finally, I have also shown how official youth crime prevention and GYDP discourses drew on actuarialist discourses at different levels. This became apparent when looking at the very structure of policy documents, designed to audit the delivery of specified outcomes by various partners. Furthermore, the continuous references made to effectiveness, value for money and evidence-based interventions, throughout different types of texts was indicative of the pervasiveness of actuarialist discourses in contemporary youth crime prevention policy. However, the analysis has called into question the extent to which these discourses were supported by real substance and showed instead how they served the maintenance of promoted truths. For example, the analysis has shown that the ubiquitous term 'effectiveness' evaded explicit definition and how the very assumptions underpinning what has been called 'evidence-based' knowledge were not adhered to in practice. This became obvious when analysing the ways in which 'evidence' was produced and how knowledge was reproduced in what I found to be 'pseudo-scientific' ways. More importantly the analysis has shown how these actuarialist discourses were instrumentalised to further promote and put beyond question official policy discourse and perpetuate particular understandings of young people

and their offending behaviour. Thus for example, the discussion of the critiques of the risk-factor approach to understanding young people's offending behaviour was ultimately disregarded in favour of an orthodox approach to conceptualising risk-factors. This strong presence of different facets of New Public Management discourse in youth crime prevention and GYDP policy also provided evidence of the strong neo-liberal rationale underlying the wider engagement of the voluntary sector in Irish social provision more generally (Powell, 2007).

### **From youth work to youth justice work: the unfolding of a new type of professional specialisation**

One of the major contributions of this thesis has been to evaluate the consequences, which the GYDPs as an intervention have, for traditional assumptions about youth work practice and youth worker's roles and identities. I have observed at several points in this thesis how GYDPs have facilitated the emergence of 'youth justice work' as yet another 'new' professional field aimed at governing certain aspects of young people's lives. Previous research had established the wide variety of practice takings place across projects (Bowden and Higgins, 2000; Bowden, 2006), with some projects adhering to more traditional youth work principles and practices, while others join more fully in the official endeavour of youth crime prevention and youth crime control. The close analysis of contemporary GYDP policy has shown systematically how the Irish Youth Justice Service has sought to institute new ways of working with young people, signifying a shift away from previously more diverse practices. I have suggested that the deployment of these specific technologies, including the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b), the piloting process to introduce the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), training and networking of GYDPs and project workers, as well as changed procedures in reporting and auditing, could be understood as cultural work facilitated through pastiche (O'Sullivan, 2005: 322-323).

For example, I have shown how the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) while rhetorically claiming to draw on the diversity of local knowledge, systematically favoured those types of knowledge-regarding young people, their offending behaviour, and appropriate interventions- which underlined official policy discourse. Preference was accorded to managerialist and corporatist definitions of success, individualising work with young people, over alternative and already existing practices. Similarly, I have shown how the *Baseline Analysis* (IYJS, 2009b) aimed at establishing to what extent projects were aligned with official discourse and took the first step

of introducing the new logic of youth crime control to them. The piloting process, conducted to gradually introduce the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), sought to 'membership' projects (O'Sullivan, 2005: 38) into the reform process and it did this successfully. By testing the various training and assessment tools with selected projects, projects were allowed to modify these, but had to engage with them. Equally I have shown how the selection of training materials was based on particular rationalities which reinforced official discourses. Finally, the close analysis of the new reporting and auditing requirements introduced, demonstrated how they were designed with a view to re-align project workers' priorities from their practice aimed at broadly supporting young people's personal development and social education towards reducing young people's offending behaviour through youth justice work.

The added analysis of interview data obtained from project workers' and JLOs' provided further understanding of these findings which signalled the emergence of 'youth justice work'. Project workers and JLOs were generally keen to point out the unique value that youth work brought to the projects, highlighting above all different aspects of relationship building. There was also a consensus among interview participants that project work on GYDPs differed in three significant ways from youth work as it is typically practiced: the target group of young people, the focus on behavioural change achieved mainly through increased levels of one-to-one work and the involvement of families in project work. Nevertheless, clear differences emerged with regards to the extent to which project workers appropriated the priorities of 'youth justice' work. For example, those project workers whose youth work identities were strongly asserted throughout interviews were keen to define the projects' objectives in broader terms and not necessarily according to official project objectives. Others participated more actively as co-producers in the 'major political project' of youth crime prevention (France and Utting, 2005), by reiterating official project objectives. The pragmatic approach to interview analysis adopted in this thesis (Alvesson, 2002) also allowed me to show how at some points, youth work principles were severely compromised in the context of the GYDPs, as for example in the case of voluntary participation. While officially upholding the principle of voluntary participation, interview participants outlined how young people's participation was often used as a condition of supervision, closely coordinated with the JLOs. Several of these statements also demonstrated how the power differential between project workers or JLOs on the one hand and young people on the other hand was exploited to achieve young people's participation. In these cases, project workers had repositioned themselves as partners in control and had formed part of an extended support system for Garda diversion work. This

demonstrated the fluidity between penal and welfarist social spheres and the related risks of 'net-widening' (Cohen, 1985).

Nevertheless, there remained a marked difference with regards to the level of reflection of the increasing involvement of youth work in the GYDPs between those project workers drawing more strongly on a youth work identity than others. The former were reflective of their involvement in the projects and sought to reiterate how they would within the confines of 'youth justice work', seek to carve out a space for youth work practice. Having said that, my analysis has also shown how the very understanding of youth work across the board was limited to a rather narrow conceptualisation of youth work as personal development and tended to be conceptualised restrictively in terms of education and employment. Project workers generally highlighted how their work was focusing on individual work rather than group work and on personal development, rather than social education. Similarly, the conceptualisation of active participation of young people was rather limited across the large majority of projects. Here it seemed that contemporary understandings of youth work in the Irish context more generally in combination with advanced liberal constructions of crime prevention, allowed GYDPs to at least partly contribute to maintain 'inequality, legitimate existing relations of power, and to extend social control over potentially troublesome sectors of society' (Rose, 1990:123).

### **The *Agenda of Change*- the intensification of advanced liberal rationalities**

The analysis of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) took a central place in this thesis, as the changes introduced therein brought into sharp relief the specific qualities of contemporary youth crime prevention policy. Overall, I suggested that the changes introduced through the *Agenda of Change* represented an exemplification of how the management of risky individuals is developed in advanced liberal societies. In the search for constant improvement of interventions into young people's lives, interventions are constantly re-aligned and further specified (Rose, 1999). Another aspect of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61, which I highlighted in my analysis was how it was an identity project designed by the Irish Youth Justice Service with the aim to align or 'membership' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 38) project workers and JLOs to the desired changes and new rationalities of youth crime prevention. The close analysis of project workers' and JLOs' engagement with the introduced changes highlighted how the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) had in many instances significant effects on



activating project workers' self-regulating capacities in line with official demands. On the other hand, the attention paid to reading project workers' and JLO's statements as discursive as well as material resistance also highlighted the contested nature of the reform agenda.

For example, the analysis of the discursive materials conveying the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) showed how it was imbued throughout with actuarialist discourses and technologies, such as the introduction of new reporting and assessment mechanisms to trace individual projects' adherence with the new goals. The interview findings confirmed how pervasive some aspects of these actuarialist discourses promoted in the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) had become. Some project workers and JLOs even took on the role of champions of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) defending and explaining how what they understood as increased accountability was necessary and justifiable. This positioning seemed to be further strengthened, as the introduction of actuarialist technologies was perceived by a significant number of project workers to address the previously experienced lack of project governance in terms of project governance before their management was centrally taken over by the Irish Youth Justice Service.

Beyond this, the analysis of the discursive effects of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) also suggested how it was largely successful in refocusing project workers' attention towards particular ways of thinking about young people, their offending behaviour and ways of working with them. For example, the introduction of formal risk assessment tools and alcohol and public order offending profiles in many instances directed project workers' gaze along the lines suggested in these. The analysis also showed more importantly, how the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) has contributed significantly to transform project workers' priorities towards being predominantly informed by young people's needs to the prioritisation of the perceived need to control youth crime in respective localities. Only very few project workers critically reflected and distanced themselves from this rationale and the interview findings suggested that in several instances this rationale supported the explicit extension of social control work in GYDPs.

Nevertheless clear points of contestation and strategies of resistance also emerged in project workers' and JLOs' engagement with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61). For example, several project workers and JLOs remarked critically how the introduction of more detailed and more frequent reporting and assessment criteria would limit their actual time spent on

working with young people. Some project workers also commented on how they would use the very channel of reporting to demonstrate resistance. For example, project workers commonly deployed the strategy of reporting what was requested in terms of numbers of project participants, while defying project guidelines by continuing to work with those young people who they personally deemed to be in need of support. Others again showed resistance through 'de-authorising' the IYJS by including activities in their reports to the IYJS, which did not adhere to the criteria demanded by the IYJS. Similarly, several project workers carved out space for work with young people within what they described as increasingly limited confines and described how they consciously sought to not let reporting and assessment frameworks affect the core of their work.

In summary, it was interesting to note, that contestation of the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) emerged most strongly in those instances, where project workers strongly drew on youth work identities as compared to those who had more ambiguous understandings of their roles. This level of contestability was at a broader level significant as it highlighted the ongoing distinctiveness of youth work as a field of practice with young people. However, the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61), which is still ongoing at the point of writing seems to nevertheless be successful in 'conducting the conduct' of project workers through instituting self-regulatory mechanisms. This showed how agendas which are both socially progressive as exemplified by some core youth work principles and neoliberal as promoted by the Irish Youth Justice Service through the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) can coexist at the same time.

### **Young people, their families and offending behaviour- categorising and calculating knowledge and the production of the autonomous subject**

At several points in this thesis I have sought to distil how young people and their offending behaviour as well as interventions designed to address these were constructed in official youth crime prevention policy and in project workers and JLOs discursive constructions. At policy level, I have shown how the new youth crime prevention agenda subordinated young people's needs to matters of improving system effectiveness and the reduction of youth crime. This was coupled with a rather limited understanding of young people's role in terms of participation in youth justice policy which emerged as either tokenistic or non-existent in the formulation of relevant policies. The lack of young people's participation was also mirrored in nearly all of project workers' accounts with regards to young people's participation as stakeholders in the

projects. The majority of project workers conceptualised young people's participation in such limiting terms as choosing project activities. Tying in with advanced liberal notions of the entrepreneurial subject (Kelly, 2006), young people's citizenship and potential was equally conceptualised in rather narrow terms of educational and employment chances.

Beyond these, several dominant discourses emerged with regards to the construction of young people's offending behaviour. A close analysis of official youth crime prevention policy as well as GYDP policy showed how the 'risk-factor paradigm' dominated explanations of their offending behaviour. Tying in with the new youth crime prevention agenda, the permanent repetition of risk factors and other attempts to categorise and classify young people's offending behaviour (e.g. through the alcohol and public order offending profiles), contributed to the process of 'liberal othering' (Young, 2011:64) as well as individualising young people's offending behaviour. Even in instances where there was opportunity to extend the risk-factor paradigm to a broader socio-cultural understanding of youthful offending (as e.g. in the case of 'neighbourhoods'), these were entirely absent in official policy discourse. The analysis has further shown how the risk-factor discourse was reinforced through pathologising and policing language in describing interventions designed to address the outlined 'risks'. At the same time, the explication of binaries in relation to how young people, their families and offending behaviour was described, showed how the 'ideal' young person and the 'ideal' family was described in entirely middle-class norms, essentially dismissing the 'real' backgrounds of most young people and their families coming in contact with the GYDPs.

Project workers' and JLOs' discursive constructions of young people's offending behaviour could be grouped under two broad headings. Thus, young people's offending behaviour was described largely through a combination of age old 'confident characterisations' (Lesko, 1996) of young people, which focussed on various biological, psychological and other developmental aspects of 'adolescence'. I have suggested that advanced liberal youth crime prevention discourse reinforces the emergence of these 'confident' characterisations, as they both equally pay marginal or no attention to the broader socio-cultural patterns of youth more generally or youthful offending more specifically. Even in instances where interview participants for example alluded to issues related to poverty, individualising explanations of offending behaviour were granted ultimate explanatory power. Also mirroring official youth crime prevention discourse, I have further shown how young people, as well as their families and areas of living were described through a range of socio-cultural deficiencies. Here, the GYDPs

themselves were constructed as locations where the 'right' type of values and norms were transmitted and in stark contrast with young people's families and social lives. These were described mostly as bleak and hopeless places which could not be penetrated easily by the work ongoing on the projects.

In line with individualising discourses of young people, their offending behaviour and the stronger focus on personal development work rather than social education, most interview participants then described their work with young people in similar ways. Young people need to be involved in self-reflection, self-realisation and building up their self-esteem, so they could be reattached to the 'virtuous community' (Rose, 2000:334). In line with the 'moral underclass discourse' (Levitas, 1998:21), the necessity of outside supports was acknowledged, but this did not alter the rationale that young people were ultimately charged with responsibility for taking control of their lives. In their combination, these discursive constructions of young people and their families excluded alternatives which would also look at the role and responsibility of wider societal institutions and their responsibilities towards young people. While strategies that focussed mainly on changing young people's subjectivities were sometimes rationalised as pragmatic solutions or as a response to a perceived hopelessness to change wider societal factors negatively affecting young people's lives, their strong presence was evidence of the unquestioned truth status they have achieved.

### **Overall contribution**

Garda Youth Diversion Projects now form a core element of official youth justice policy and deal with a substantial number of young people on a yearly basis. Nevertheless this provision has largely escaped the same critical scrutiny which its statutory partner, the Juvenile Diversion Programme, has attracted. The analysis undertaken in this thesis has contributed to address this gap at several levels. The suggestion here, was however not to necessarily question the welfarist nature of diversion and prevention upon which the GYDPs are based but to interrogate their underlying rationalities. In line with the post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis I have sought to analyse Irish youth crime prevention policy and GYDP policy not as a coherent grand narrative but as the result of an assemblage of different rationalities and technologies, what Rose has called 'contingent lash-ups of thought and action' (1999:27). The close analysis of GYDP policy couched within broader youth crime prevention policy has shown how its development has been guided by three central and

mutually dependent ideas. First the acceptance and indeed promotion of ever-advancing specialisation of 'prevention' as a way of dealing with possible future youth crime or offending behavior, has reached unquestioned truth status. This is emblematic of modernity in the broader sense where the vicious cycle of prevention is thought to provide a sense of security or that something is being 'done' in a social landscape which is increasingly complex and unpredictable (Prout, 2000; Burman, 2001; Freeman, 1999). Second, I have shown how this approach to prevention is reflective of and at the same time reinforced by advanced- liberal rationalities of governance. Subjects, both young people and project workers in the case of this thesis, are governed at a distance through their involvement in a range of disciplinary technologies, including reporting, assessment, self-reflection and behavioural change. Finally, I have shown how values essentially reflective of a neo-liberal market economy, such as effectiveness and evidence- based work with young people, are at the core of contemporary youth crime prevention policy as well as GYDP policy.

Built on the premise that discursive constructions of young people and their offending behaviour are productive of particular types of interventions, I have also sought to identify how young people are constructed in official policy texts as well as by project workers and JLOs. This has been revealing insofar as it highlighted a wide array of class-based and problematising discourses deployed when describing young people, their families and offending behaviour. The analysis has also systematically traced and made visible what has been described as 'paternalistic' cultural attitudes towards children and young people in Irish Society and as stigmatisation of young people in conflict with the law (Ombudsman for Children Office, 2011).

Most recently it emerged that government officials at the highest levels in the Department of Justice had in relation to young offenders incarcerated in St. Patrick's Institution denied them the very capacity to report and reflect on their mistreatment (O'Sullivan, 2012). This thesis then has contributed to show how seemingly benign and 'technical' policy texts are also based on assumptions about young people which allow the permeation and continuation of such discourses. While official youth justice policy increasingly involves a 'children's rights' discourse, the analysis has shown how young people's participation in youth justice policy and GYDP practice is non-existent or tokenistic, how young people's active participation and citizenship are constructed in limited terms and how age-old 'confident characterizations'

coupled with continuous references to socio-cultural deficiencies of young people and their families create the young person involved in the GYDPs and their families as deficient 'others'.

Finally, this thesis has also offered a platform for critical reflection on the involvement of the voluntary youth work sector in the GYDPs. While I have shown that project workers when interviewed showed different levels of accommodation and resistance to official policy discourses about young people and ways of working with them, it was nevertheless clearly visible how 'youth justice work' was emerging as a distinct way and further 'specialisation' of working with young people. I have shown how in the current landscape of GYDP governance, the actions and souls of workers were increasingly governed through the deployment of various technologies with the view to make them the best possible administrators of those young people 'at the margins'.

### **Theoretical contributions**

This thesis contributed significantly to the theorisation of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. Similarly to Ilan's observations (2007, 2010) that GYDPs were channels of transmitting middle class values to working class young people, and a continuation of longstanding dynamics of Irish youth justice more generally, this study has also shown how young people and their families are constructed through particular socio-cultural deficiencies and the idealisation of middle class values as the ultimate goal to be achieved. However, the thesis has shown how this does not only happen in the cultural every day practice of the local GYDP setting as observed by Ilan (2007), but how it is also facilitated and enabled by official policy discourses. In addition, I have shown that class based rationalities are only one of many operating within the projects and therefore on young people as well. Thus, I have shown for example how advanced liberal definitions of the autonomous youthful subject and the 'entrepreneurial' self favour particularly individualising interventions with young people. The focus on young people's 'inner thoughts' has been described by Cohen as 'new behaviourism' (Cohen, 1985:152) and forms a typical feature of advanced liberal youth justice systems (Gray 2009). In addition, this analysis has shown how this rationality was made easier by an understanding of youth work as mainly being about 'personal development'.

Studies conducted in similar inter-agency settings have sought to explore the extent to which different professional groups (social workers) negotiate their professional roles in the face of meeting other professions and demands maybe running counting to their original professional ethos (Burnett and Appleton 2004; Pratt, 1989; Souhami, 2007). In the Irish context, Bowden (2006) usefully pointed out with the help of two case studies of GYDPs how the workers in one turned into crime preventionists while the others were anchored more strongly in a youth work tradition. Similarly, this thesis has shown diversity in responses to changed demands on project workers, however it was interesting to see that those project workers who were strongly rooted in a youth work informed practice were uneasy participating in the crime prevention agenda, while those from other professional backgrounds were more amenable to the increasing shifts of projects towards very targeted crime prevention projects.

Furthermore, the empirical work undertaken as part of this thesis sheds further light on the debate ongoing mainly at the abstract level relating to the involvement of youth work organisations in increasingly state led agendas (Hurley, 1992, 1999; Geoghegan, 1998; Kiely, 2009; Mc Mahon; 2009; Treacy, 2009). The analysis revealed that it is difficult in the everyday work of GYDPs for project workers to work with young people in the ways they have in the past and as their ways of thinking and working with young people become increasingly determined by the Irish Youth Justice Service, rather than by their parent youth work organisations. Here, this thesis has contributed significantly to addressing a research gap as to the effects of the co-production of 'youth justice work' by the state represented through the Irish Youth Justice Service on the one hand and the voluntary sector represented through youth work organisations and independent community management organisations on the other. The thesis has also shown the effects on those positioned to achieve this 'co-production' on a daily basis.

The findings as well as emerging questions highlighted through the analysis of the role of youth work in penal welfarist interventions such as the GYDPs is significant in the context of what can be described as the increasing 'interpenetration of penal and civic spheres of social action' (Corcoran, 2011:32) and the participation of youth workers and their parent youth work organisations in the expansionist networks concerned with governing young people's lives. This also relates to broader questions as to the involvement of the voluntary sector's role in contributing to 'ideological changes in interlinked areas of social policy' (Corcoran, 2011:32).

The social construction of youth and the often closely associated category of 'delinquency' has been a longstanding phenomenon and the analysis revealed how powerful these images or 'confident characterisations' were in discourses deployed by project workers and JLOs. However, the analysis also showed how advanced liberal constructions of the individual further reinforced these constructions, as they shared the commonality of individualising young people's offending behaviour at the expense of excluding wide socio-cultural dynamics relevant for influencing young people's offending behaviour. Here, I have shown how this way of thinking about young people and their offending behaviour is facilitated by the permanent repetition of the underlying logics of the risk-factor paradigm in official policy discourse.

Finally, the work has also highlighted how the adoption of a governmentality framework can highlight some contradictory tendencies of the corporatist agenda of advanced liberal crime control. While it seeks to spread the responsibility for potential young offenders to a wide range of actors, including youth work organisations, and emphasises the importance of 'multi-faceted' solutions to 'multi-faceted' problems, the very core rationale of the new youth crime prevention agenda remains firmly fixed on addressing the individual young person and their offending behaviour, remote from wider structural concerns. Similarly, the analysis has shown how young people are subordinated to priorities of creating better systems and of the reduction of crime as core focal points of youth justice reforms and ends in themselves.

### **Methodological contributions**

I have shown in this thesis how the deployment of a post-structuralist approach to social policy analysis and the application of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis was effective in responding to the research questions posed in this thesis. More specifically, I would like to highlight several specific knowledge contributions which this thesis produced as a result of the adoption of the above mentioned theoretical and methodological framework. However, I also want to draw attention to how I dealt with what I identified as two major methodological challenges throughout this thesis. The overarching historical scepticism adopted in this thesis and the questioning of all types of problem representations made explicit and revealed patterns and systematic occurrences of dominant discourses, which otherwise might have gone unnoticed. Thus, the very starting point of this thesis was built on the presumption that all objectives and measures described and proposed in official youth crime prevention discourse should be regarded as 'contestable propositions and matters of political choice'



(Moss and Petrie, 2002:79). I have also systematically pointed out how absences occurred in the repetition of dominant discourses and how these were equally important in analysing the rationalities and technologies deployed in official youth crime prevention and GYDP policy. For example, I have shown throughout how the individualising explanations of youthful offending excluded wider socio-cultural explanations of youthful offending behaviour, which also facilitated the negation of wider societal and institutional responsibility towards young people participating in the GYDPs.

In addition, the tracing of the effects of dominant discourses was useful in making empirically explicit the otherwise rather abstract connection of knowledge-power, central to a Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse. For example, I have shown how dominant discourses emphasising 'effectiveness' and 'value for money' have the effect of depoliticizing social issues. Structural reasons for offending behaviour and wider responses to young people's offending behaviour are relegated to the margins, while individualising and pathologising interventions with young people are privileged. I have also shown how young people are objectified through a number of problematising discursive constructions, which favour particularly middle-class norms and thus create very specific understandings of the 'ideal' young person or the 'ideal' family, while simultaneously excluding others. The adoption of a Foucauldian conceptualisation of the productive effects of power was useful at several points in the analysis. Through the analysis of project workers' engagement with the *Agenda of Change* (IYJS, 2009b:61) for example, I could show how the changes introduced therein contributed in many cases not only to align project workers with the centrally decided and steered project agenda, but also addressed concerns around lack of leadership and previously experienced ontological insecurity with regards to project workers' roles in a relatively fluid and undefined project landscape.

Social policy analysis based on a 'governmentality' framework has often been critiqued for being anti-empirical (see McKee, 2009) and staying at the level of 'texts', rather than 'reality'. While responding to this critique is futile from strictly post-structuralist perspectives that understand discourse and reality as intertwined, the expansion of the discursive corpus through interviewing project workers and JLOs has added additional insights into the effects of dominant policy discourses on project workers' and JLOs' subjectivities and how they favoured particular interventions and ways of constructing offending behaviour over others. In addition to highlighting various ways of resisting dominant discourses, the deployment of interviews

also in itself created 'resistant space' for project workers to reflect on and voice concerns relevant to the unfolding of dominant discourses. Finally, the adoption of a pragmatic approach to the analysis of interviews (Alvesson, 2002) utilised in this thesis allowed me to stay at the level of discursive analysis at one level, but where appropriate to use insights gained to comment on material practices and realities.

Two major methodological caveats accompanied me while I conducted this research. While it was impossible to wholly exclude their impacts, I hope that drawing attention to these demonstrates how I tried to address these conceptually and pragmatically. The first related to my status as a researcher contributing as yet another 'new class intellectual' (Kelly, 2007:47) to subjectifying young people, their families and various constructions of offending behavior. Kelly suggested that a wide array of professionals and experts through their deployment of 'processes of 'intellectually grounded' knowledge production, constantly reformulated ideas about, among other things, 'badness, madness, youth, health, education and sexuality': all this in a manner determined by the 'application of certain tenets and procedures which claim reason or reality as their guide' (Kelly, 2007:47). Throughout both the analysis as well as the writing up of this thesis, I have tried to rigorously avoid proposing alternative options of seeing and constructing young people, but rather to trace how various 'new class intellectuals' i.e. policy makers, project workers and JLOs contribute to producing various truths about young people, their offending behaviour and ways of dealing with it.

Finally, I want to re-iterate how discursive analysis of interview materials as conceptualised in this thesis did not seek to 'uncover' interview participants' true feelings, emotions or attitudes towards certain issues. Thus it was notable how all interview participants showed a genuine interest and passion in working with young people. However, I did not claim in the analysis to demonstrate how some project workers had a more 'genuine' understanding of young people than others. Rather, the analysis was more concerned with showing how interview participants' discourses revealed, when interviewed, are created through an assemblage of available discourses.

### **Concluding remarks**

Adopting a post-structuralist lens to the analysis of contemporary Irish youth crime prevention policy and the GYDPs as a specific intervention, demands a re-thinking of the priorities of

analysis. By moving the focus from asking what types of interventions work to an analysis of the discourses and rationalities underlying contemporary youth crime prevention and GYDP policy and practice, this thesis has offered a counter-discourse to empirically driven and evidence based research on children and young people. Rather, the approach adopted encourages the reader to take a step back and question some of the core foundations and basic assumptions upon which current policies and practices with young people in the field of Irish youth crime prevention policy are based. While no practical policy solutions or suggestions for change follow from genuinely adhering to such an approach, I would suggest that a questioning of core rationalities offers the only possible first step to genuinely rethink some of the ways in which youth crime prevention policy is designed and executed.

While conducting this study, I had many exchanges with other researchers and practitioners involved in researching or observing different professionals' interactions with children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. What was striking was how often I was approached with stories of disbelief and disappointment about how some professionals talked about the children, young people and their families behind their back and in conversations with the respective researchers or practitioners. The common theme emerging from all of these exchanges was how bleak and hopeless these young people's futures were envisaged by professionals who interact with them and arguably shape their subjectivities on a daily basis.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown that this impression is more complex and multi-layered. Project workers' and JLOs' constructions of young people and their offending behaviour contains contradictions and tensions, combinations of current and old discourses, mixtures of dominant and more latent discourses and attempts to create alternative ways of thinking about young people and their offending behaviour. However the lack of achievement with the latter is often perceived as frustrating and disappointing to the respective professionals. Nevertheless, I have demonstrated how there are strong discursive threads running through official youth crime prevention and GYDP discourses, which permeate the imaginative space of discursive practice taking place within the GYDPs. For example, I have shown continuously, how young people and their offending behaviour are constructed through a range of deficit based risk factors in combination with longstanding 'confident characterisations' typically associated with adolescence. I have also demonstrated how young people's citizenship is mainly positioned in relation to their educational and employment potentials and achievements. These wider constructions of young people also resonated with largely

individualising explanations of and solutions to offending behaviour. Young people's wider social, economic and cultural backgrounds were either excluded in explanations of or solutions to offending behaviour, or seen as not changeable. These problematising and individualising discourses were further extended to young people's families and environments and what could be described as 'middle-class' norms of young people and their families were idealised.

In keeping with the post-structuralist approach adopted in this thesis, I take the freedom within these last lines of this research to go beyond the confines of the modernist 'social science' box and reflect on a broader set of conclusions or questions which I propose. Could it be that in addressing the longstanding historical, institutional and societal ill-treatment of children and young people in general - through more stringent child protection provisions and an increased emphasis on evidence-based and accountable interventions in different areas - at the same time a more limited, functionalist and prescriptive imagination of young people's lives, their behaviours, and corresponding services and interventions have been adopted? Is there room for example in the provision of youth crime prevention initiatives to re-imagine young people, their families and their communities? Where would this process start?

Peter Kelly, a renowned youth researcher and governmentality scholar, has suggested that a reflection on our own lives as young people might help us to reflect on the current focus of social science and policy and service delivery discussions. Many of our own youths were spent with taking risks of different kinds and experimenting with behaviours without necessarily being prudent, rational or forward thinking about their consequences. Yet, young people constructed in contemporary risk-based policy discourses 'ought to have this at their focus, ought to have developed a risk aware, prudent, responsible disposition to present practices and future consequences.' (Kelly, 2011: 445). Kitty te Riele (2010) has suggested that the concept of 'hope', which she conceptualised not only in relation to the individual young person, but also in relation to broader social hope and reform (te Riele, 2010: 44), could replace the current thinking around young people's risks and disadvantages. In the concrete settings of schools or youth work, she suggests that young people's hopes should become the focus of practice. Here, based on Biesta (2006), she suggests professionals such as teachers and youth work practitioners should also support young people in questioning and critically reflecting on their hopes and simultaneously reflect on how wider institutional and societal challenges impact on young people's these. These suggestions are not unfamiliar in more radical approaches to education (see e.g. Freire, 2004; Giroux, 2003), or indeed in more

progressive approaches to youth work (see e.g. De St. Croix, 2007; Jeffs 2002). However te Riele's emphasis on how it is important to also start re-thinking the language we use in describing children or young people in official policy and practice is crucial.

Upon final reflection, it is not difficult to see how alternative approaches to imagining or working with young people in contexts such as GYDPs are side-lined both in official youth crime prevention policy as well as in many practice environments. As I became increasingly immersed in the reading and analysis of official policy texts and the detailed tools, such as reporting formats, deployed to implement their underlying rationalities, texts which construct alternative possibilities for thinking about children or young people appeared increasingly utopian ( see Kelly, 2011; Moss and Petrie, 2002; te Riele, 2010). At the same time, the rather bleak and hopeless scenario of young people involved in the GYDPs described by so many project workers, made these appear even more important. This is not diminish the value of systematic, accountable and evidence-based thinking and practice with children and young people in general and more specifically in youth crime prevention initiatives, but maybe it is time, to also create space for hope and the emergence of alternative voices at different levels of youth crime prevention policy and practice.

## **List of Appendices**

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## **Appendix 1 Overview of participating GYDPs, project workers and JLOs**

The following information is provided so as to demonstrate the variety of projects and interview partners involved in the research. However to guarantee project workers' and JLOs anonymity, all the pieces of information are presented without attributing the different descriptors to each other and thus making identification of interview participants less likely.

### **Pseudonyms of different interview participants<sup>1</sup>**

**Project workers:** Aaron, Claire, Jessica, Marian, Fiona, Patrick, Davina, Matthew, Martin, Max, Sophie, Collette, Chiara, Michael, Siobhan, Nancy, Gina, Anna, Theresa, Oliver, Niamh, Una

**JLOs:** Rachel, Laura, Gavin, Peter, James, Kieran, Paul, Simone

### **Year of Establishment of GYDPs**

1994  
1998 (2)  
1999  
2000  
2007 (5)  
2008 (2)

### **Managing Organisations**

National youth work organisation 1 (2)  
National youth work organisation 2 (2)  
National youth work organisation 2  
Regional youth work organisation 1  
Regional youth work organisation 2  
Regional youth work organisation 3  
Regional youth work organisation 4  
Regional youth work organisation 5  
Regional youth work organisation 6  
Independent Management agency

### **Pilot Phase**

Pilot phase 1: 2 projects  
Pilot phase 2: 1 project  
No pilot phase: 9 projects

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the gender of some interview participants has been changed in some instances so as to further increase the level of anonymity of interview participants.

### **Project locations**

1. Largely prosperous suburban area with pockets of public housing in large city, subject to rapid development during Celtic Tiger
2. Very disadvantaged suburban area of large city with extensive public housing, part of RAPID
3. Very disadvantaged suburban area in large city, with extensive public and private housing estates, part of RAPID
4. Long established inner city neighbourhood of large city, part of RAPID
5. Large suburban area; not an area associated with disadvantage, but focus of significant development during Celtic Tiger.
6. Administrative county capital, RAPID area
7. Large town with extensive rural and agricultural hinterland. Part of RAPID.
8. Large town with significant areas of disadvantage
9. Established inner city neighbourhood with a population profile mainly with lower socio-economic status
10. Small town in expanding commercial and industrial centre with areas of disadvantage – part of RAPID
11. Large town, significant levels of long term unemployment, part of RAPID
12. Highly disadvantaged suburban area of large city –part of RAPID

### **Length of employment of different project workers on GYDP**

1 month  
6 months (2)  
1 year (3)  
2 years (4)  
3 years (6)  
4 years (4)  
8 years  
10 years (2)

### **Types of qualifications held by project workers on GYDP**

Social Work degrees (BA/MA)  
Social Care degrees  
Youth Justice Certificate holders  
Various academic degrees (BA/MA, humanities, law and social science, business and management)  
Community and Health Services degrees  
Youth work/youth studies degrees at various levels (Diplomas/BA/MA)  
Mentoring



Appendix 2 Interview details			
Interview Participant	Interview Date	Interview Location	Interview Length
Interview 1			
Project worker Aaron	5 <sup>th</sup> of May, 2011	Project premises	1h:43min
Interview 2			
Project worker Una	12 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	51 min
Interview 3			
Project worker Claire	9 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	1h:28 min
Interview 4			
Project worker Niamh	10 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	47 min
Interview 5			
Project worker Jessica	17 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	1h:08 min
Interview 6			
Project worker Oliver	17 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	1h:09 min
Interview 7			
Project worker Marian	26 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	58 min
Project worker Theresa	26 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	
Interview 8			
Project worker Fiona	1 <sup>st</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	1h:02 min
Interview 9			
Project worker Anna	1 <sup>st</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	54 min
Interview 10			
Project worker Patrick	3 <sup>rd</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	1h:08 min
Project worker Gina	3 <sup>rd</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	
Interview 11			
Project worker Davina	10 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	53 min
Interview 12			
Project worker Matthew	13 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	1h:03 min
Interview 13			
Project worker Nancy	4 <sup>th</sup> of July 2011	Project premises	54 min
Interview 14			
Project worker Martin	22 <sup>nd</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	49 min
Interview 15			
Project worker Siobhan	22 <sup>nd</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	23 min
Interview 16			
Project worker Max	29 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	46 min
Interview 17			
Project worker Michael	29 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	55 min
Interview 18			
Project worker Sophie	12 <sup>th</sup> of July 2011	Project premises	1h 6 min
Project worker Ciara	12 <sup>th</sup> of July 2011	Project premises	
Interview 19			
Project worker Collette	7 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	56 min
Interview 20			
Manager Ger	10 <sup>th</sup> of May 2011	Project premises	46 min
Interview 21			
JLO Peter	11 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Hotel Bar	53 min
Interview 22			
JLO James	14 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Garda Station	47 min

<b>Interview 23</b>			
JLO Kieran	22 <sup>nd</sup> of June 2011	Garda Station	58 min
<b>Interview 24</b>			
JLO Gavin	27 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Garda Station	1h 03 min
<b>Interview 25</b>			
JLO Laura	28 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Garda Station	38 min
<b>Interview 26</b>			
JLO Rachel	28 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Garda Station	46 min
<b>Interview 27</b>			
JLO Paul	29 <sup>th</sup> of June 2011	Project premises	43 min
<b>Interview 28</b>			
JLO Simone	July 6 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Garda Station	38 min

### **Appendix 3 Project budgets and expansion**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>	<b>Amount of Funding</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>		
1991	2	€ 55,000.00
1992	2	€ 55,000.00
1993	2	€ 55,000.00
1994	4	€ 155,000.00
1995	6	€ 256,995.00
1996	10	€ 517,996.00
1997	12	€ 557,997.00
<b>Phase 2</b>		
1998	14	€ 675,000.00
1999	29	€ 1,296,500.00
2000	51	€ 1,743,192.00
2001	64	€ 3,215,080.00
2002	64	€ 4,490,151.00
2003	64	€ 5,066,936.00
2004	64	€ 4,904,656.00
<b>Phase 3</b>		
2005	64	€ 5,182,798.00
2006	74	€ 6,423,747.00
2007	100	€ 7,270,141.00
2008	100	€ 7,996,223.00
2009	100	€11.678,000.00 <sup>1</sup>
2010	100	€ 11.607,920.00

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<sup>1</sup>From IYJS 2009 Annual Report. In 2009 the IYJS allocated funding of €11.678m to Garda projects, which included €3.187m under the European Social Fund element.

#### **Appendix 4 - 2005 Overview of Youth Crime Prevention Initiatives<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Interventions aimed at Young Offenders/Children at Risk of Offending</b>	
Probation and Welfare Service	Probation and Welfare Projects
An Garda Siochana	Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme Garda Youth Diversion Projects
<b>Preventative initiatives aimed at poverty and social exclusion</b>	
Probation and Welfare Service	Local Drugs Task Force Projects
Department of Education and Science	School Completion Programme, Junior Certificate Support Programme Youth Encounter Projects Youthreach, Children at Risk Initiative, Special Projects for Youth Scheme
Department of Health and Children	Community based Programmes, Springboard Projects, Youth Advocacy Programme, Family Welfare Conferencing, High Support and Special Care, Youth Homelessness Service
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht	Community Development Programmes, Local Development Social Inclusion Programmes, Young People's Facilities and Services Fund, Dormant Accounts
<b>Initiatives with a broad target group</b>	
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme
An Garda Siochana	Garda Primary Schools Programme, Garda Second Level/SPHE Programme
Department of Education and Science	Early Start Pilot Programme, Rutland Street Project, Traveller Pre-Schools, Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, Giving Children an Even Break, Breaking the Cycle, Home School Community Liaison Scheme, Support Teacher Project, Book Grant Scheme, First Steps Initiative, Junior Certificate School Programme Literacy Strategy,
Department of Health and Children	General Childcare/Family Support Services
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht	Area Based Rural Development Initiative and Leader + Initiative

<sup>1</sup> Compiled from Youth Justice Review 2005

## **Appendix 5 Interview guide project workers**

### **A. The project worker involved in GYDPs and the professional context**

1. Could you provide me with the overall objective of the project? What is the project aiming to do?
2. Could you tell me about why you became a project worker and what were your previous jobs prior to taking up this post?
3. What is the title of your current post?
4. What role do you play in this project – what are your key responsibilities?
5. Did you complete training in youth work or in a related field?
6. Have you participated in particular training programmes (induction / in-service training) to undertake your current role?
7. What values and principles do you think are very important when working with young people?
8. How do you think GYDPs may be different to other youth work projects with reference to the ways you work with young people?
9. Do you think of yourself predominantly as doing youth work or crime prevention / diversion work on a day to day basis?
10. What is your concept of diversion and prevention in the context of the project and what does it entail specifically?
11. Considering you work directly with young people, what aspects of the work involved in the GYDPs specifically do you find challenging?
12. Who do you cooperate with in project implementation?
13. Do you think the focus and direction of the work you have been doing here has changed over time or is in the process of changing – if yes, in what ways?

### **B. Young people and offending**

14. Can you talk to me a little about the local youth crime scene?
15. What role do you think this project plays in relation to it?
16. Do you think the projects can contribute to reducing youth crime in the area and other set outcomes (see Question 1)?
17. Can you describe in very general terms the kind of young people you work with?
18. Can you talk to me a little about young people's pathways into this project? How do they generally come to be here?
19. What techniques or general steps are used in this project to assess the young person's suitability for participation in the project?
20. How do you think other people in the community perceive the young people, who participate in this project?
21. Have you ideas about the origins of the participants' problems? What are typically the causes of their offending behaviours?
22. What is the potential of young people you work with in your view?
23. Do you think the current set up provides opportunities to consider the young person as an individual, rather than a young person engaged in offending?

24. How do you think the young person in the project perceives you as a worker on the project?
25. How do you think they perceive the project – what do they think about this project and what it seeks to achieve?

**C. Working with young people on the GYDPs**

26. What do you want to achieve with young people during their involvement in the project, what would you describe as successful outcomes?
27. Which techniques, skills and principles are in your experience effective in achieving positive outcomes with the young people you work with?
28. When you work with young people, what are the main obstacles to achieving the desired goals?
29. To what degree do the young people participating shape the project's agenda?

**D. The Irish Youth Justice Service and the recent change process**

30. Could you rank for me, what you consider to be the major changes, instigated by the IYJS over the past two years?
31. Much of the IYJS material refers to basing practice on different kinds of 'evidence' – what is often called evidence based practice: what evidence base do you draw upon in your work with young people?
32. Is it easy for you to accept the 'new deal' for the projects? What would you do differently, why and how?
33. Given all these changes, do you think there is a place for youth work in these projects and if there is, what is it?

## **Appendix 6 Interview guide JLOs**

### **A. The JLO involved in GYDPs and the professional context**

1. Could you provide me with the overall objective of the project? What is the project aiming to do?
2. Could you tell me about why you became a JLO and what were your previous jobs prior to taking up this post?
3. What is the title of your current post?
4. What role do you play in this project – what are your key responsibilities?
5. Did you complete training to become a JLO?
6. What values and principles do you think are very important when working with young people?
7. How do you think GYDPs may be different to other youth work projects with reference to the ways you work with young people?
8. What is your concept of diversion and prevention in the context of the project and what does it entail specifically?
9. Considering you work directly with young people, what aspects of the work involved in the GYDPs specifically do you find challenging?
10. Who do you cooperate with in project implementation?
11. Do you think the focus and direction of the work you have been doing here has changed over time or is in the process of changing – if yes, in what ways?

### **B. Young people and offending**

12. Can you talk to me a little about the local youth crime scene?
13. What role do you think this project plays in relation to it?
14. Do you think the projects can contribute to reducing youth crime in the area and other set outcomes (see Question 1)?
15. Can you describe in very general terms the kind of young people you work with?
16. Can you talk to me a little about young people's pathways into this project? How do they generally come to be here?
17. What techniques or general steps are used in this project to assess the young person's suitability for participation in the project?
18. How do you think other people in the community perceive the young people, who participate in this project?
19. Have you ideas about the origins of the participants' problems? What are typically the causes of their offending behaviours?
20. What is the potential of young people you work with in your view?
21. Do you think the current set up provides opportunities to consider the young person as an individual, rather than a young person engaged in offending?
22. How do you think the young person in the project perceives you as a worker on the project?
23. How do you think they perceive the project – what do they think about this project and what it seeks to achieve?

**C. Working with young people on the GYDPs**

24. What do you want to achieve with young people during their involvement in the project, what would you describe as successful outcomes?
25. Which techniques, skills and principles are in your experience effective in achieving positive outcomes with the young people you work with?
26. When you work with young people, what are the main obstacles to achieving the desired goals?
27. To what degree do the young people participating shape the project's agenda?

**D. The Irish Youth Justice Service and the recent change process**

28. Could you rank for me, what you consider to be the major changes, instigated by the IYJS over the past two years?
29. Much of the IYJS material refers to basing practice on different kinds of 'evidence' – what is often called evidence based practice: what evidence base do you draw upon in your work with young people?
30. Is it easy for you to accept the 'new deal' for the projects? What would you do differently, why and how?
31. Given all these changes, do you think there is a place for youth work in these projects and if there is, what is it?



### **Appendix 7 Management organisations of projects**

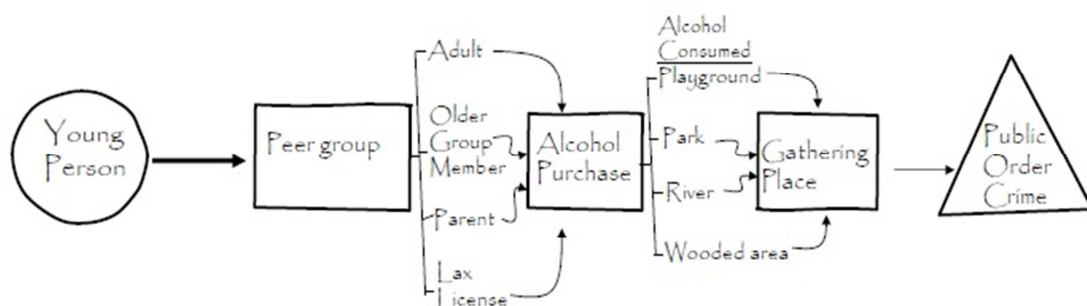
<b>Implementing Organisations</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>
Foroige	29
Independently managed projects	25
Catholic Youth Care	10
Waterford Regional Youth Service	7
Kerry Diocesan Youth Service	6
Midlands Regional Youth Service	4
Limerick Youth Service	3
Ogra Chorcaí	3
Youth Work Ireland	3
North Connaught Regional Youth Service	3
Cloyne Diocesan Youth Service	2
Kildare Youth Service	2
Clare Youth Service	2
City of Dublin Youth Service Board	1
Total	100

Source: IYJS, 2009:9

## Appendix 8 Alcohol and Public Order Crime Profiles – Baseline Study<sup>1</sup>

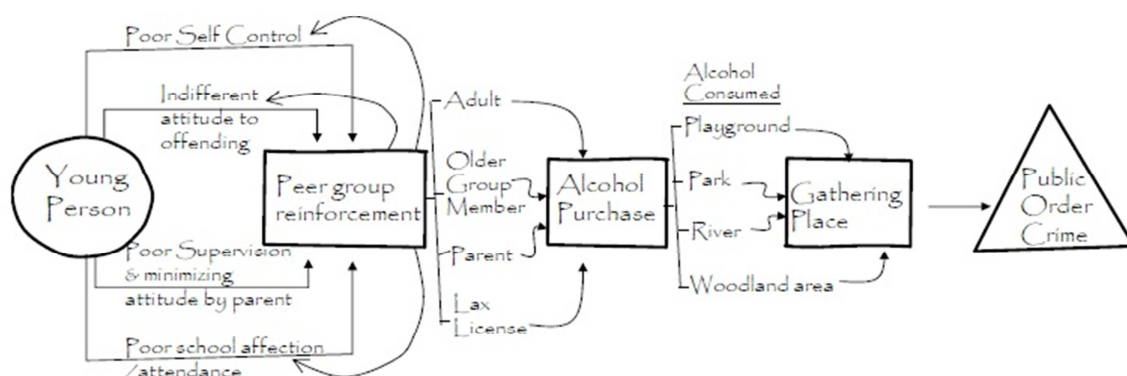
### Alcohol and Public Order Crime Profile 1

Ad Hoc membership / Ad Hoc Activity



### Alcohol and Public Order Crime Profile 2

Regular Membership / Regular Activity

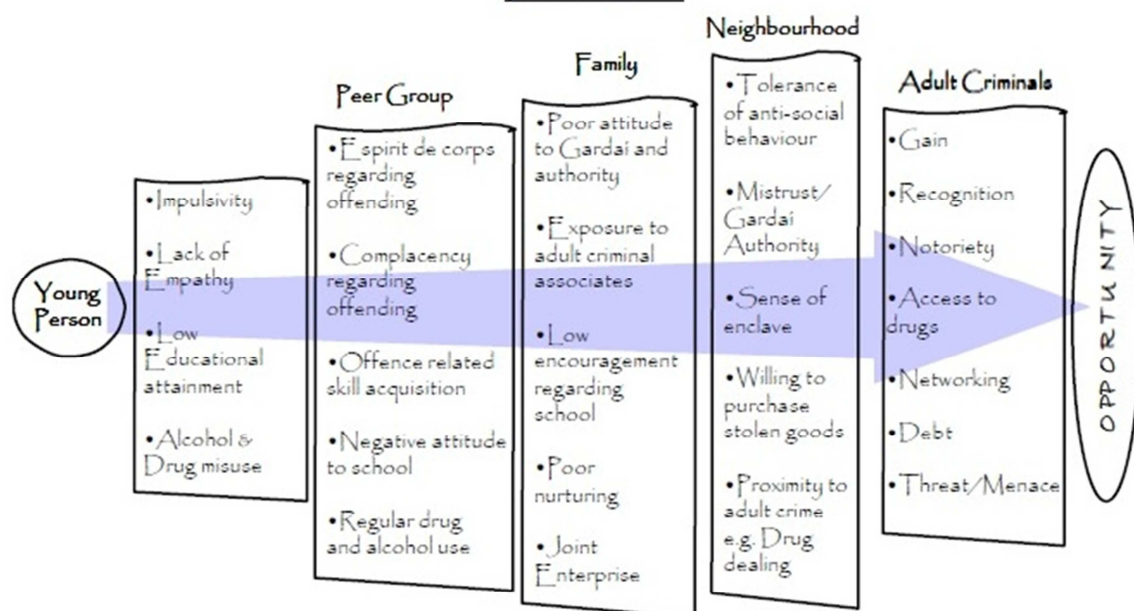


<sup>1</sup> Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009b: 36-42.

# Alcohol and Public Order Crime Profile 3

Regular membership, widespread activity, external influence

## Influences



**Appendix 9 Sample letter to interview participants**

Cork, 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2011

Re: Participation as Interviewee in PhD Research Study

Dear xx,

As discussed with you on the phone earlier this week, I am writing to seek your participation in my PhD research study in your capacity as project coordinator/youth worker/JLO on the xx project. I am based in the School of Applied Social Studies at University College Cork and my study is entitled *A critical social analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy with a special emphasis on the Garda Youth Diversion Projects*.

My research is funded by the Office of the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs. The project entails an analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy and an exploration of the practical work of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. More specifically, I am interested to find out how different professional groups (youth workers/project coordinators/JLOs) understand and negotiate their roles, the challenges and opportunities they encounter in working with young people, their parents and other agencies.

To achieve this, I will interview 30 professionals on 10 Garda Youth Diversion Projects around the country. I would be very thankful, if you would consider participation and could spare approximately 1.5 hours sometime in the months of May, June or July at a time convenient to you.

I will guarantee absolute confidentiality and will not publish any information that might identify you or the project you work on.

With your permission, I shall contact you shortly to discuss further details and to arrange a meeting, if you are agreeable to participate.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Katharina Swirak

Phone email

## **Appendix 10- Letters of Notification**

To: Superintendent Collette Quinn  
Head, Garda Office for Children and Youth Affairs  
Community Relations & Community Policing  
Garda Headquarters  
Harcourt Square  
Dublin 2

From: Katharina Swirak  
3 Park Avenue East, Lios Rua  
Banduff Road, Ballyvolane  
Cork  
Tel 085 823 8256  
kswirak@gmx.net

Cork, 25th of March  
2011

### **Re: Notification of OMCYA - funded PhD Research Study on Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

Dear Ms. Quinn,

I am a second year PhD student, based in the School of Applied Social Studies at University College Cork, undertaking a study with the working title *A critical social analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy with a special emphasis on the Garda Youth Diversion Projects*. My study is funded by the Office of the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs.

I am writing to notify you of my study, which is now moving into the fieldwork/interview stage. I have already discussed different elements of my study in detail with Mr. Sean Redmond, Head of Young Offenders Programme, who has been very helpful in guiding me through the current landscape of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

My project entails an analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy and an exploration of the practical work of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. More specifically, I am interested to find out how different professional groups (youth workers/project coordinators/JLOs) understand and negotiate their roles, the challenges and opportunities they encounter in working with young people, their parents and other agencies. To achieve this, I will interview professionals on ten Garda Youth Diversion Projects around the country. I would like to state clearly, that I will not be dealing with young people in any way during my research project, as the focus is entirely on professional groups.

I will be contacting projects individually for their participation and also contact their respective management organisations. The interview materials will be treated with absolute confidentiality and anonymity and only used for analysis and academic publication, after the individual transcripts have been approved by interviewees, if they so wish.

I hope that my study will contribute to the ever evolving knowledge base of youth justice in Ireland. I think that it comes at an exciting time, as the projects are currently undergoing significant changes and are in the process of developing a transformed professional culture. Apart from academic publications, I am also planning to produce a paper for the professionals and policy makers involved in the Garda Youth Diversion Projects and I would also be happy to present my findings at a suitable meeting.

I would be happy to discuss further details with you at any time.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Katharina Swirak

To: Ms. Michelle Shannon  
National Director, Irish Youth Justice Service  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Montague Court  
7-11 Montague Street  
Dublin 2

From: Katharina Swirak  
3 Park Avenue East, Lios Rua  
Banduff Road, Ballyvolane  
Cork  
Tel 085 823 8256  
kswirak@gmx.net

Cork, 25th of March  
2011

**Re: Notification of OMCYA - funded PhD Research Study on Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

Dear Ms. Shannon,

I am a second year PhD student, based in the School of Applied Social Studies at University College Cork, undertaking a study with the working title *A critical social analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy with a special emphasis on the Garda Youth Diversion Projects*. My study is funded by the Office of the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs.

I am writing to notify you of my study, which is now moving into the fieldwork/interview stage. Although I will be seeking authorisation from individual organisations responsible for the respective projects, I would be thankful if your office would endorse my research. I have already discussed different elements of my study in detail with Mr. Sean Redmond, Head of Young Offenders Programme, who has been very helpful in guiding me through the current landscape of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

My project entails an analysis of Irish youth crime prevention policy and an exploration of the practical work of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. More specifically, I am interested to find out how different professional groups (youth workers/project coordinators/JLOs) understand and negotiate their roles, the challenges and opportunities they encounter in working with young people, their parents and other agencies.

To achieve this, I will interview professionals on ten Garda Youth Diversion Projects around the country. The interview materials will be treated with absolute confidentiality and anonymity and only used for analysis and academic publication, after the individual transcripts have been approved by interviewees, if they so wish. I would like to state clearly, that I will not be dealing with young people in any way during my research project, as the focus is entirely on professional groups.

I hope that my study will contribute to the ever evolving knowledge base of youth justice in Ireland. I think that it comes at an exciting time, as the projects are currently undergoing

significant changes and are in the process of developing a transformed professional culture. Apart from academic publications, I am also planning to produce a paper for the professionals and policy makers involved in the Garda Youth Diversion Projects and I would also be happy to present my findings at a suitable meeting.

I would be happy to discuss further details with you at any time.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Katharina Swirak



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